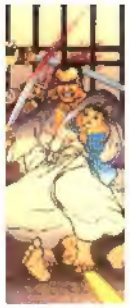
Two samurai match swords in a battle of honor; freshly planted shoots of rice bear the dying wish of a farm girl; a master gunsmith passes on his secrets to an unlikely recipient; a victim to the deadliest sword in Japan. Together, the ronin Lone Wolf and his little cub walk a path of vengeance, leaving a wake of blood and defiance wherever they roam. Combining elements of ultra-violence with a sense of deep honor and paternal love, *Lone Wolf and Cub* is in a league of its own among works of graphic fiction.

*"Lone Wolf echoes traditional Japanese art in its restrained, realistic visuals and its unrestrained stories, which evoke classical samurai tales' blend of cultured aestheticism and sheer, ruthless bloody-mindedness."*

— The Onion

Published for the first time in America in the Japanese format.



LONE WOLF AND CUB

KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

# LONE WOLF AND CUB

DARK HORSE COMICS

*Front cover illustration by* FRANK MILLER *and* LYNN VARLEY

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VOLUME 5

DARK HORSE COMICS

VOLUME 5

## BLACK WIND

*By* KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

translation
**DANA LEWIS**

lettering & retouch
**DIGITAL CHAMELEON**

cover artwork
**FRANK MILLER** with **LYNN VARLEY**

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# BLACK WIND

# 子連れ狼

*By* KAZUO KOIKE

& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME

5

# A NOTE TO READERS

*Lone Wolf and Cub* is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

# LONE WOLF AND CUB

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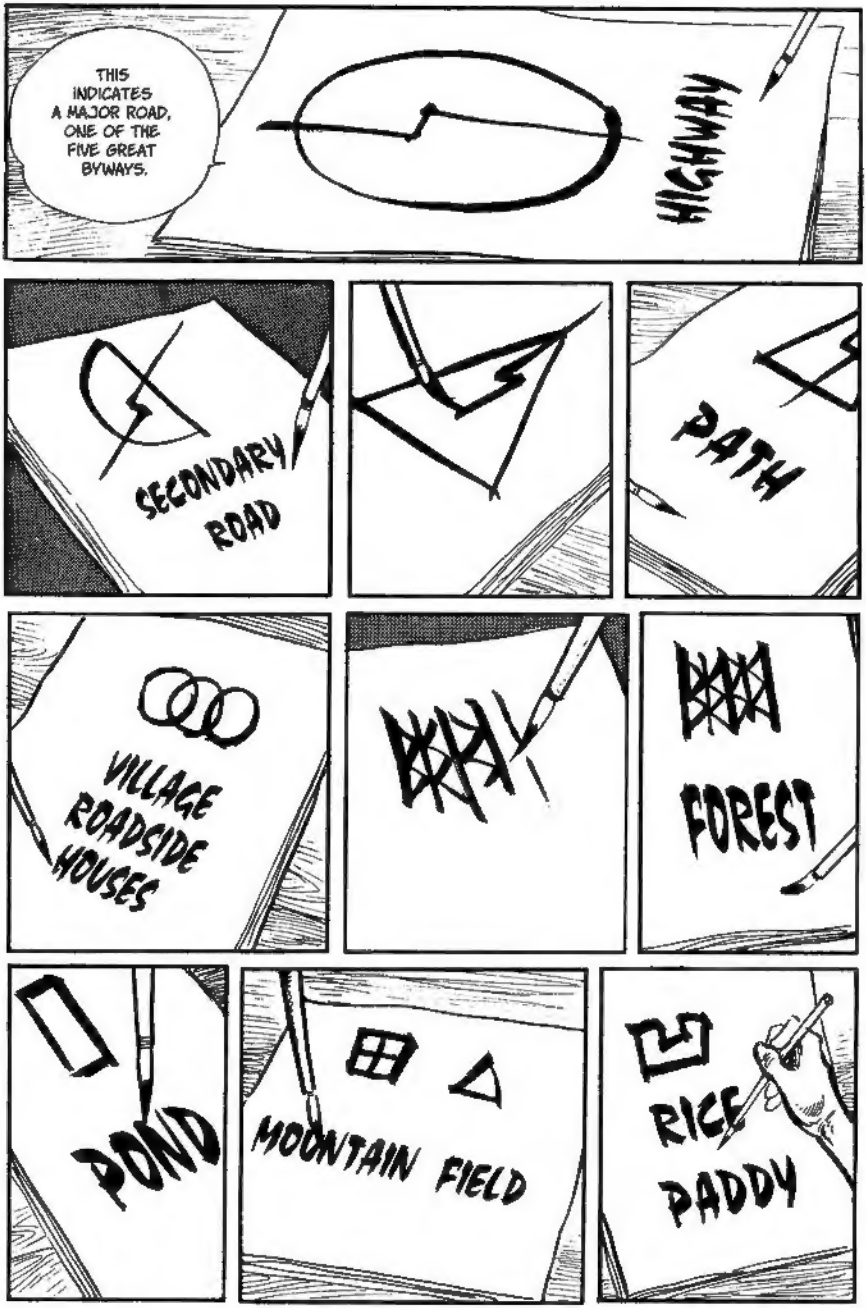
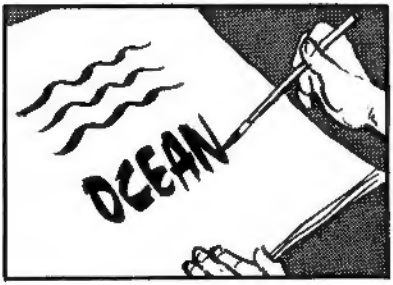
the twenty-fourth

# Trail Markers


THIS INDICATES A MAJOR ROAD, ONE OF THE FIVE GREAT BYWAYS.
HIGHWAY
SECONDARY ROAD
PATH
VILLAGE ROADSIDE HOUSES
FOREST
POND
MOUNTAIN FIELD
RICE PADDY


OCEAN

RIVERS ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE CATEGORIES.
BROOK
CREEK

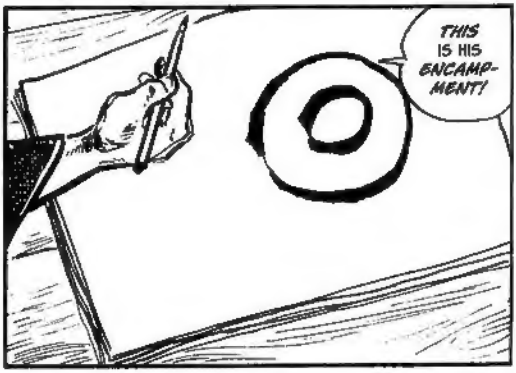
RIVER

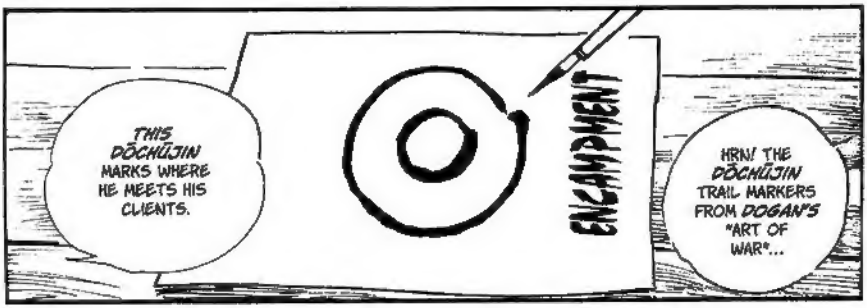
GORGE

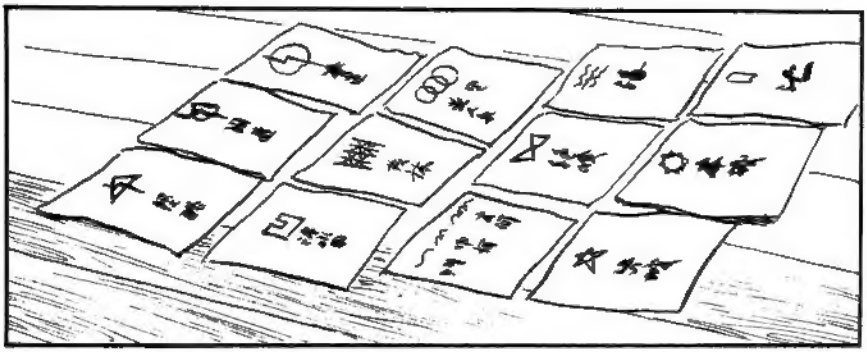
CASTLE

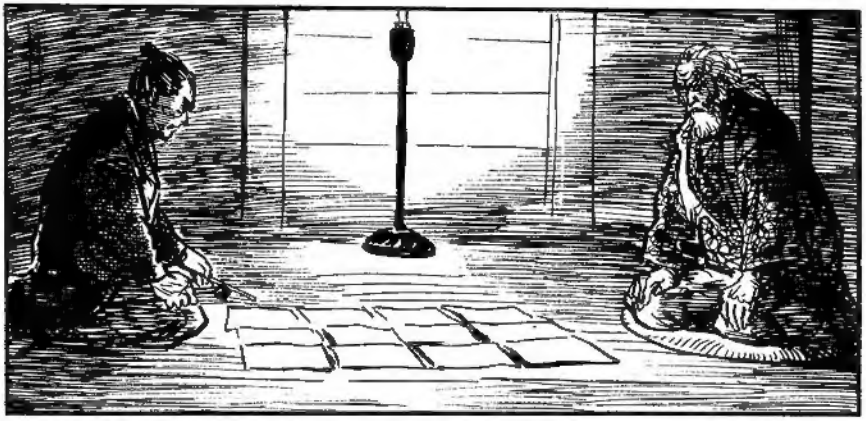
FORT

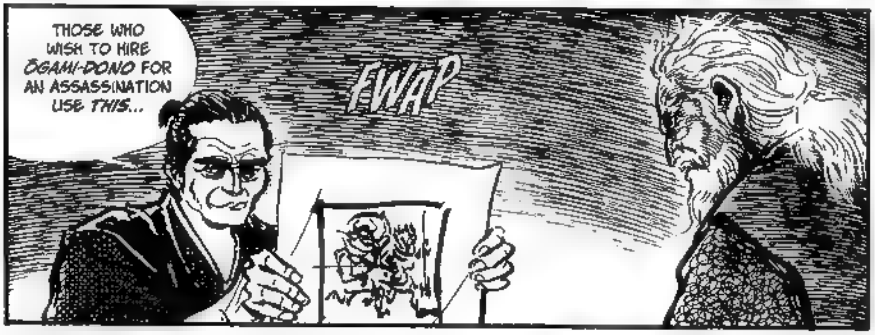
BUT THIS.

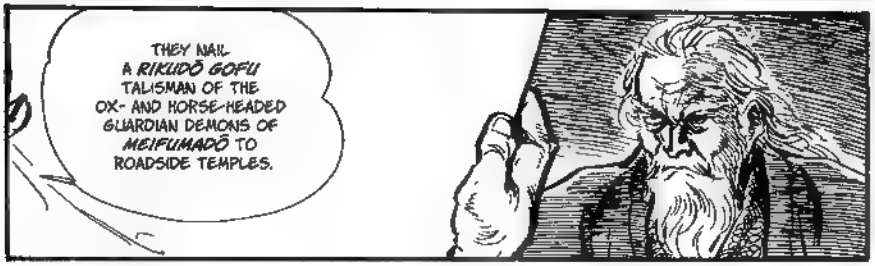

THIS IS HIS ENCAMP-MENT!

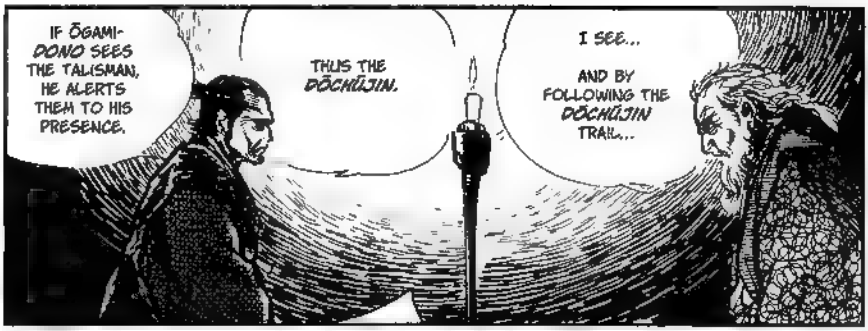

THIS DŌCHŪJIN MARKS WHERE HE MEETS HIS CLIENTS.
ENCAMPMENT
HRN! THE DŌCHŪJIN TRAIL MARKERS FROM DOGAN'S "ART OF WAR"...






THOSE WHO WISH TO HIRE *ŌGAMI-DONO* FOR AN ASSASSINATION USE *THIS*...
FWAP

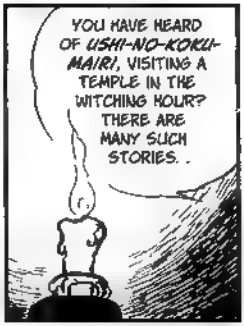

THEY NAIL A *RIKUDŌ GOFU* TALISMAN OF THE OX- AND HORSE-HEADED GUARDIAN DEMONS OF *MEIFUMADŌ* TO ROADSIDE TEMPLES.


IF ŌGAMI-DONO SEES THE TALISMAN, HE ALERTS THEM TO HIS PRESENCE.
THUS THE DŌCHŪJIN.
I SEE...
AND BY FOLLOWING THE DŌCHŪJIN TRAIL...

...THE CLIENT FINDS ITTŌ.

INDEED, MY LORD THERE MAY BE OTHER METHODS, BUT WE HAVE DOCUMENTED TWO CASES USING DŌCHŪJIN. IT SEEMS THE MOST RELIABLE.

BUT HOW DO CLIENTS LEARN OF THEM?
THIS IS SHEER SPECULATION, MY LORD. BUT MANY WHO WISH FOR THE DEATH OF AN ENEMY WILL POST CURSES AGAINST THEM AT A TEMPLE.


YOU HAVE HEARD OF USHI-NO-KOKU-MAIRI, VISITING A TEMPLE IN THE WITCHING HOUR? THERE ARE MANY SUCH STORIES. .

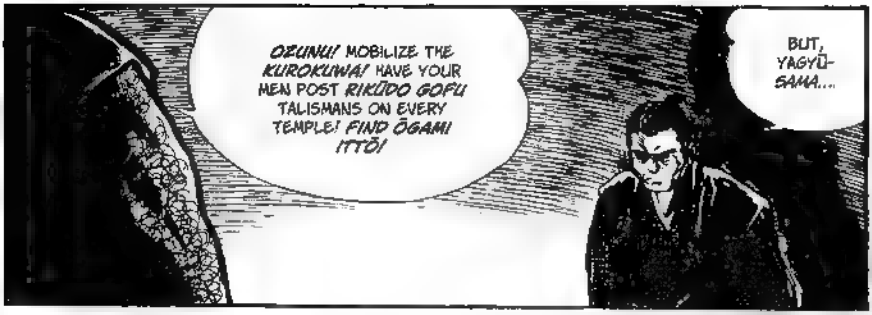
I SEE... IF HE PLACES DŌCHŪJIN WHERE PEOPLE POST THEIR TALISMANS. .
...SOME WILL BE SO DRIVEN BY HATRED TO FOLLOW THEM WHEREVER THEY LEAD. AS ŌGAMI HIMSELF CURSES OUR YAGYŪ CLAN! HOW LIKE HIM...

THE CART FOR HIS SON, DAIGORŌ-DONO. IT HAS THREE CONCEALED NAGAMAKI

WELL DONE! BUT I EXPECTED NO LESS OF ISHINE OZUNU, THE LEADER OF THE KUROKUWA NINJA
YET YAGYŪ-SAMA. WHY YOUR INTEREST IN ŌGAMI-DONO NOW?

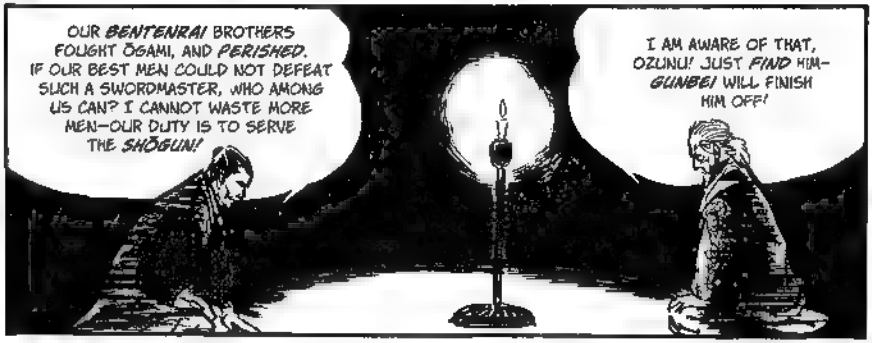
I PROMISED TO SPARE HIS LIFE AS LONG AS HE STAYED OUT OF EDO, BUT THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED--AFTER TWO YEARS, OUR FEUD IS SUDDENLY UNDER INVESTIGATION!
AND BY HIGH SHOGUNATE OFFICIALS. MEN NOT EASILY MANIPULATED.

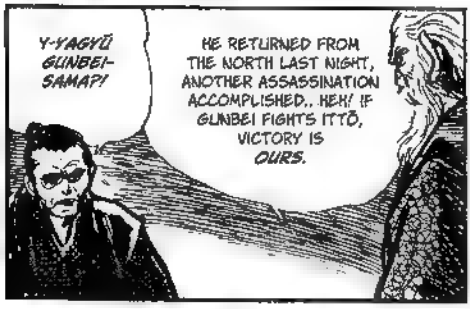
WE MUST CUT OFF TROUBLE AT THE ROOTS, BEFORE IT GROWS!


OZUNU! MOBILIZE THE KUROKUWA! HAVE YOUR MEN POST RIKŪDO GOFU TALISMANS ON EVERY TEMPLE! FIND ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
BUT, YAGYŪ-SAMA....

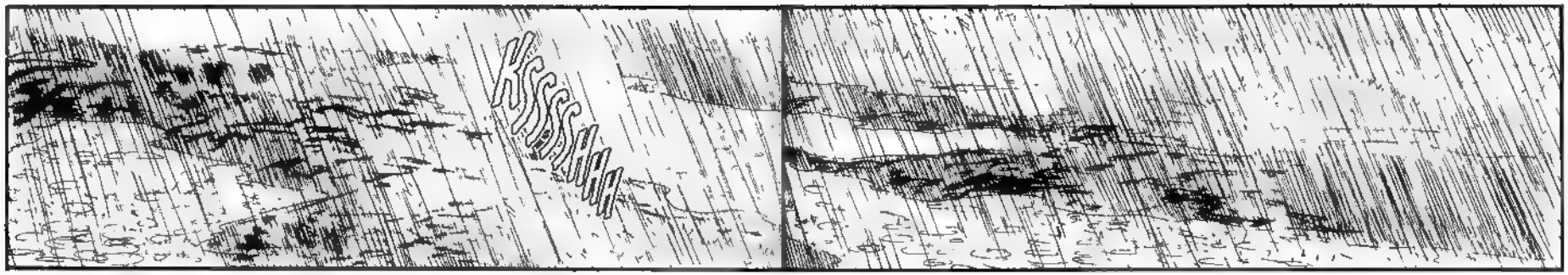
...AS I SAID BEFORE, WE KUROKUWA HAVE NO DISPUTE WITH ŌGAMI-DONO. PLEASE RECONSIDER.

HEH HEH HEH.
I THINK YOU'RE SCARED, OZUNU.

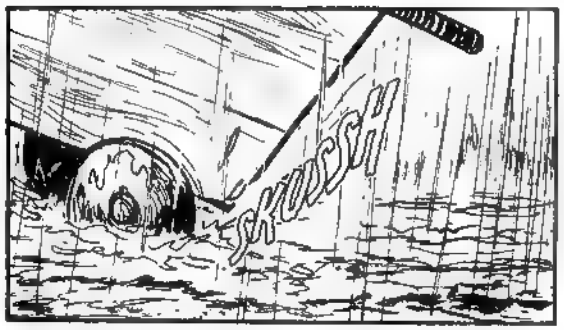

OUR BENTENRAI BROTHERS FOUGHT ŌGAMI, AND PERISHED. IF OUR BEST MEN COULD NOT DEFEAT SUCH A SWORDMASTER, WHO AMONG US CAN? I CANNOT WASTE MORE MEN—OUR DUTY IS TO SERVE THE SHŌGUN!
I AM AWARE OF THAT, OZUNU! JUST FIND HIM—GUNBEI WILL FINISH HIM OFF!

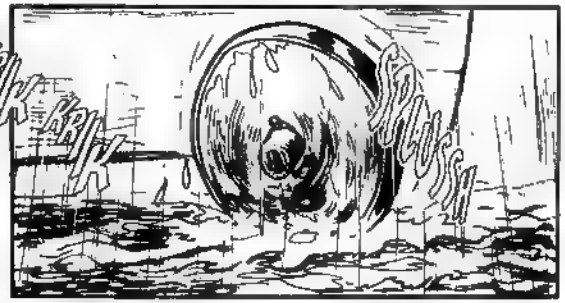

Y-YAGYŪ GUNBEI-SAMA?!
HE RETURNED FROM THE NORTH LAST NIGHT, ANOTHER ASSASSINATION ACCOMPLISHED.. HEH! IF GUNBEI FIGHTS ITTŌ, VICTORY IS OURS.

GUNBEI-SAMA STILL LIVES..?


KSSSHH

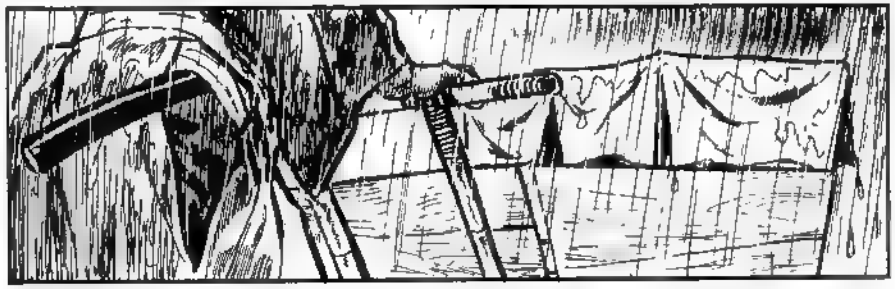
KSSSHH

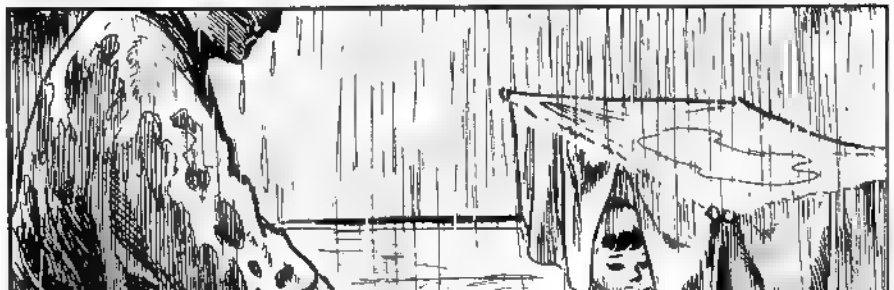

SKOSSH

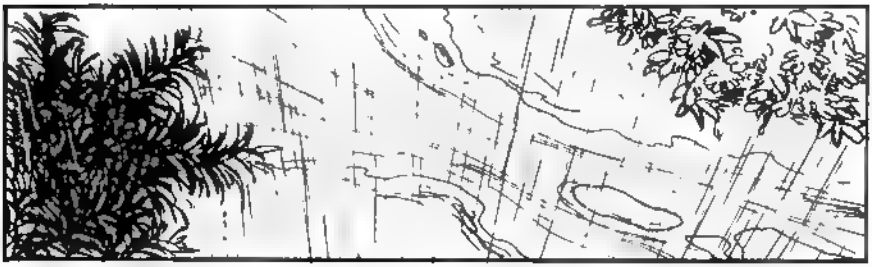

KRK
KRK
SLUSSH

SKOSSH

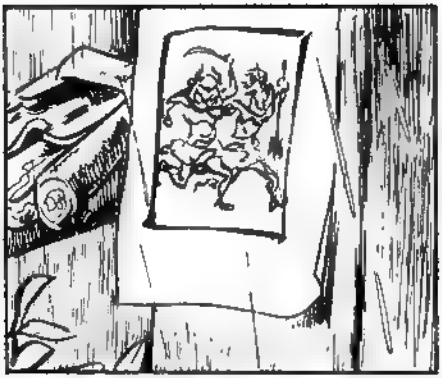
SKOSSH
SKOSSH

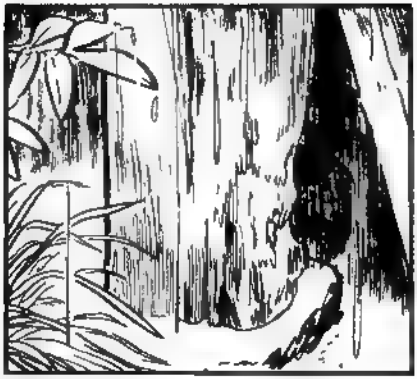






SPLSSH
SPSH

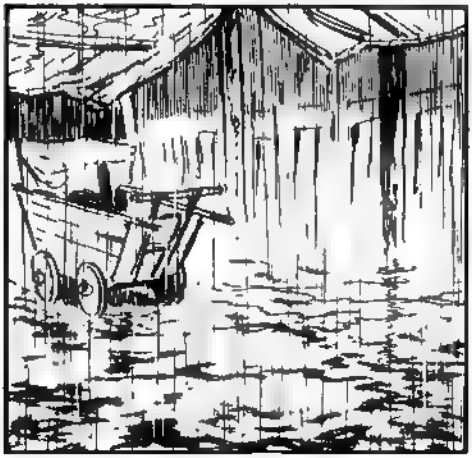


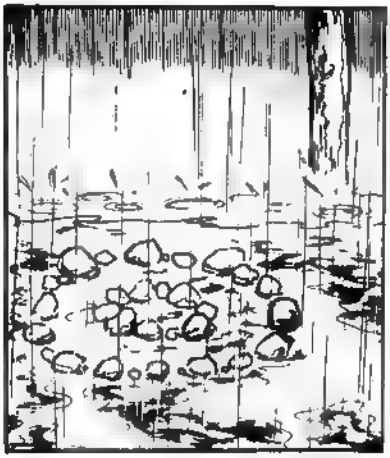


AH!
OBCHIJIN!

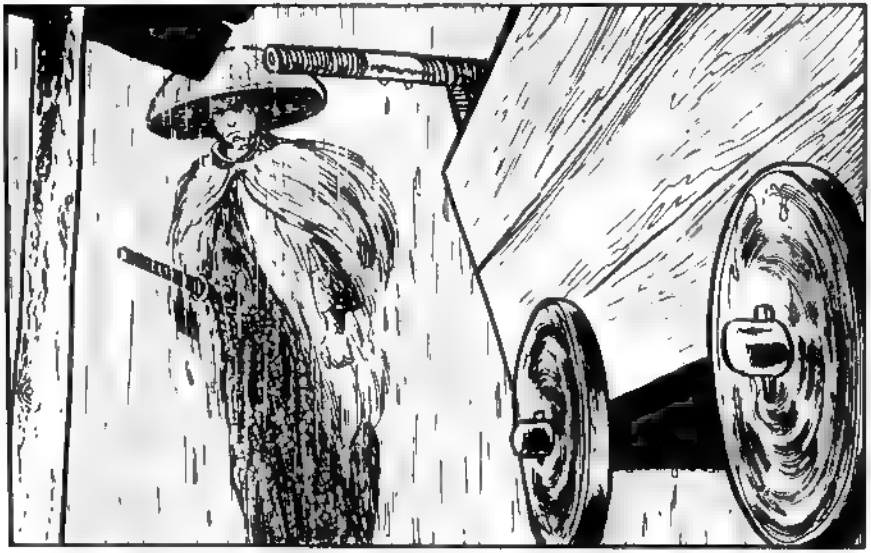
A LARGE TREE BY A POND...
WHERE THE DEVIL . . .?
I KNOW-- THE GIANT CYPRESS BY THE IRRIGATION POND!

THE KŌSHŪ BYWAY, NEAR KOMASINO.

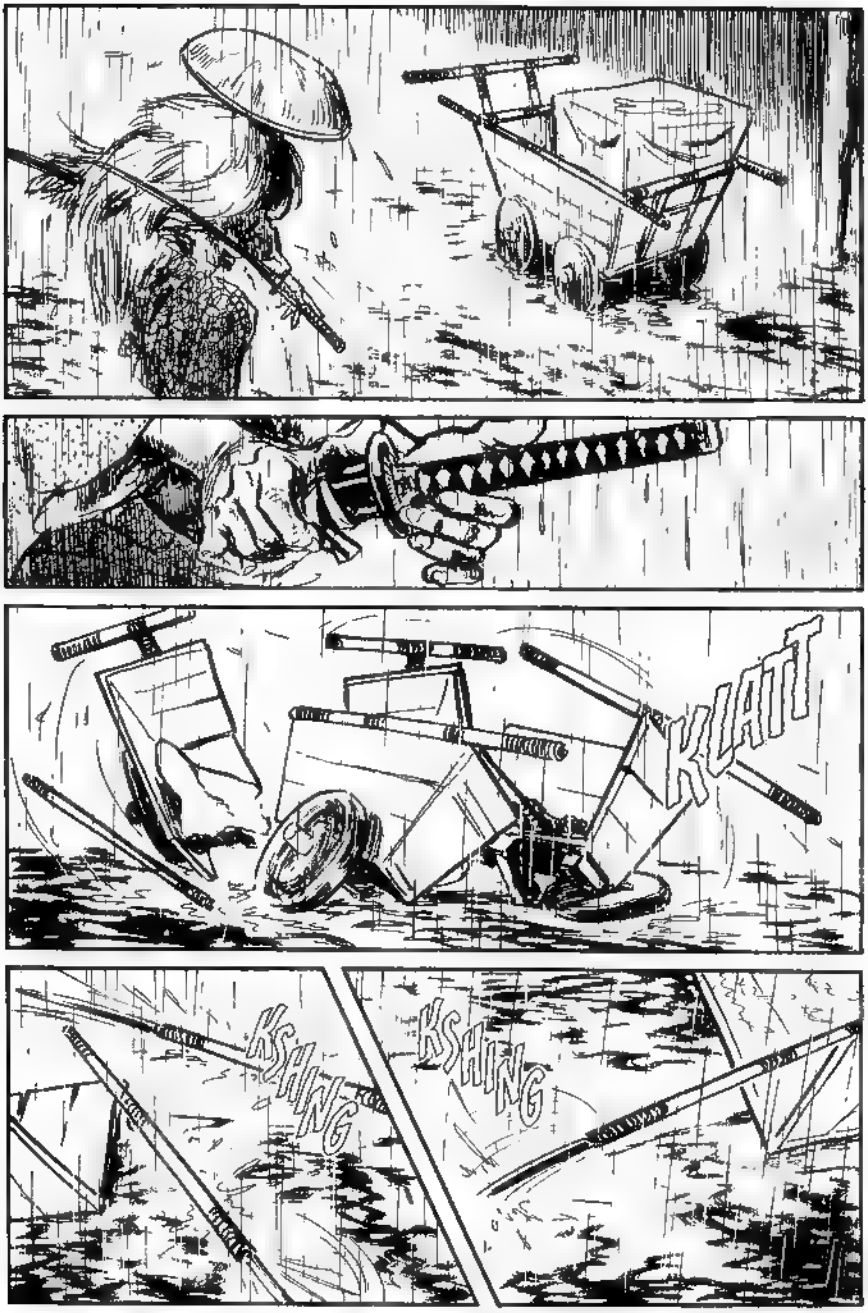




SPLOKK



FFT

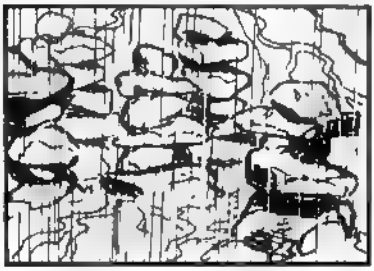

KLATT
KSHING
KSHING

SHRIK

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, ITTŌ.

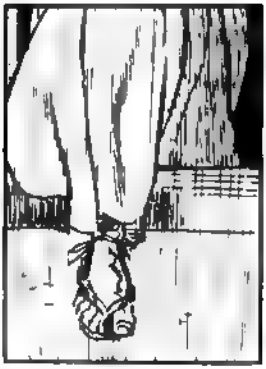
YAGYŪ GUNBEI!

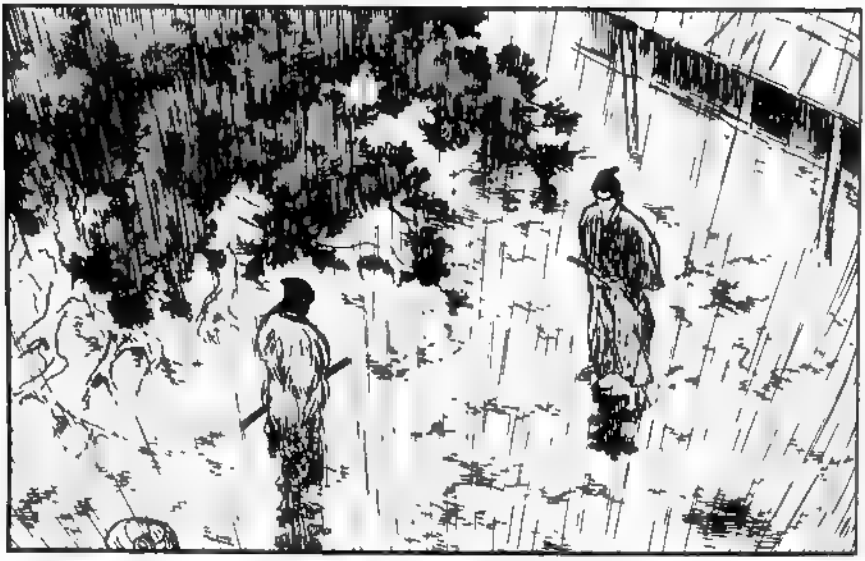
YOU SET OUT YOUR DŌCHŪJIN TO BRING IN CLIENTS. BUT YOU WERE JUST PILING ROCKS BY THE RIVERBANKS OF SAI, ITTŌ! YOU'VE SUMMONED THE GOD OF DEATH!
HEH HEH HEH.



SO. THE YAGYŪ BETRAY THEIR OWN WORD, AND SEEK MY LIFE.

WE BETRAY NOTHING, ITTÔ! I'M CHALLENGING YOU TO A DUEL.
AS A LONE SWORDSMAN! I'M HERE ALONE-- THAT'S PROOF ENOUGH.





YOU AND I WERE *RIVALS* FOR THE POST OF *KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN*, AND SO WE FOUGHT A DUEL BEFORE THE *SHŌGUN* HIMSELF!

. . . .
. . . .

AND I *DEFEATED* YOU, ITTŌ!

THE *SHIN'IN-RYŪ* SWORD OF THE YAGYŪ *CRUSHED* YOUR *SUIŌ SCHOOL!*

. . . .
. . . .

YET THEY MADE *YOU* EXECUTIONER!

THE SWORDS OF THE YAGYŪ HAVE *ASSASSINATED* TOO MANY PEOPLE--NONE MORE THAN *YOURS!*

THEY ARE SWORDS OF *DARKNESS!* THE *SHŌGUN* WAS DISPLEASED.

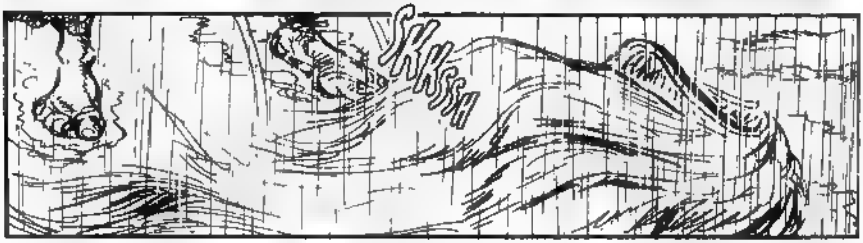
HRRN!

AND AT THE CRUCIAL MOMENT, THE TIP OF YOUR SWORD POINTED *STRAIGHT AT OUR LORD!*

I LOST WHEN I MOVED TO *PROTECT HIM!* YOUR SWORD IS NO *SAMURAI* SWORD--IT'S A SWORD OF *SLAUGHTER!* YOU BUTCHER MEN LIKE *SWINE!*

I DEDICATED MY LIFE TO DOING THE *SHŌGUN'S* DIRTY WORK *KILLING* FOR THE *TOKUGAWA* AND *THAT* WAS MY REWARD?

WELL, IT'S HISTORY NOW. THE POST OF *KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN* BELONGS TO *US!* AND WHEN I KILL YOU, THE STORY OF THE ŌGAMI CLAN *ENDS!*



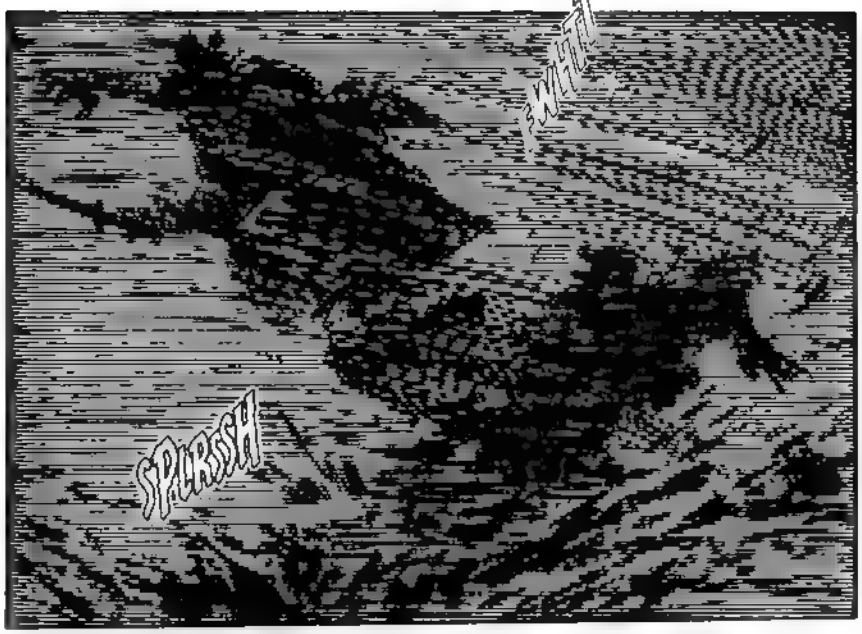
NOW WILL YOU USE YOUR SUMO SWORDWORK IN MUD, ITTŌ?!
HEH. I COULD DEFEAT YOU EVEN ON DRY GROUND, BUT HERE YOU DON'T HAVE A CHANCE!

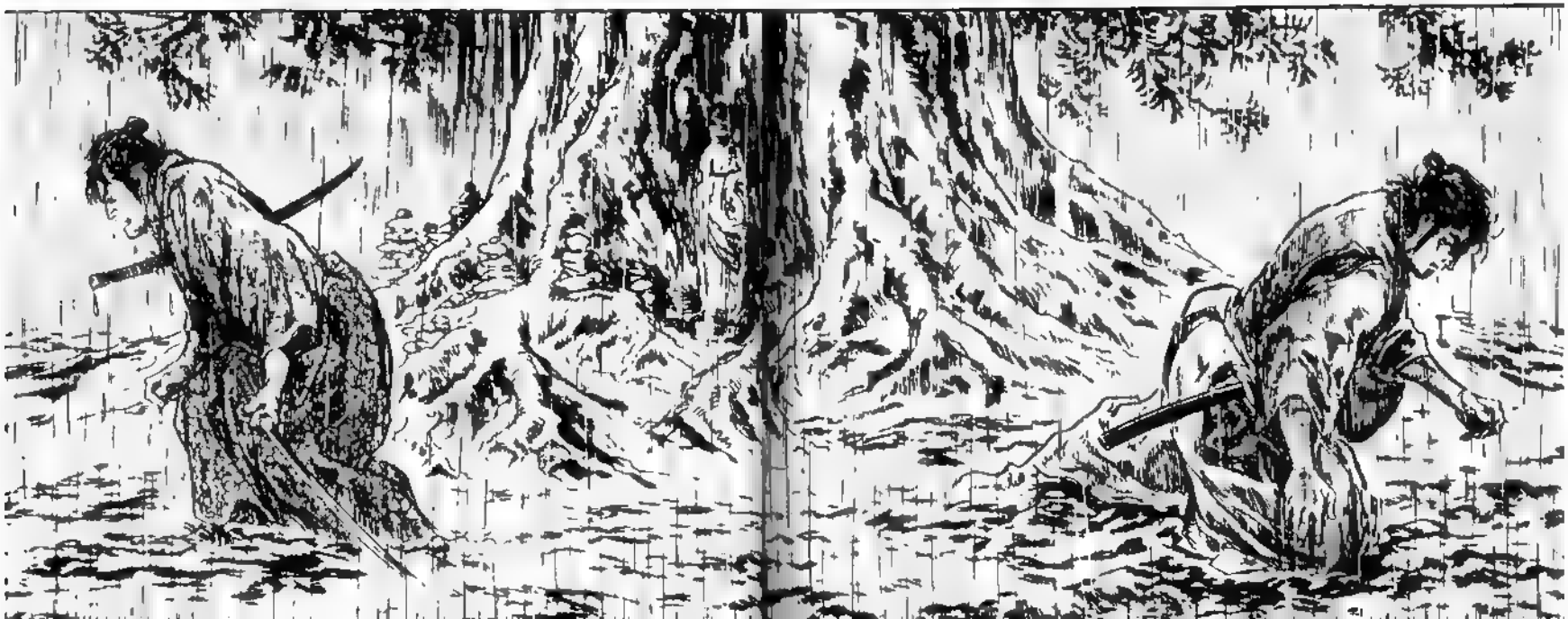
SPLKK
MY RAIN CLOAK WILL GIVE ME ALL THE FOOTING I NEED!

....
....

SWK

DIE!!


WHIT
SPLASH

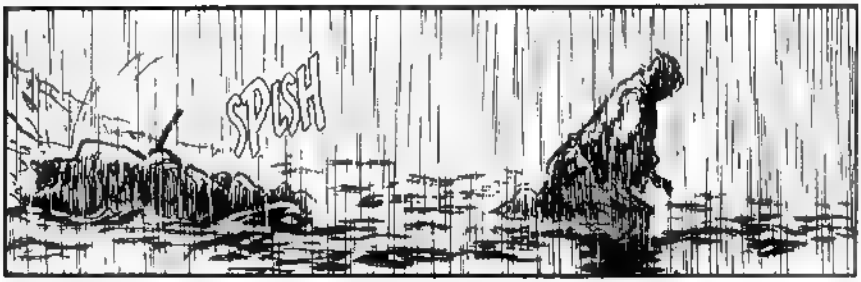


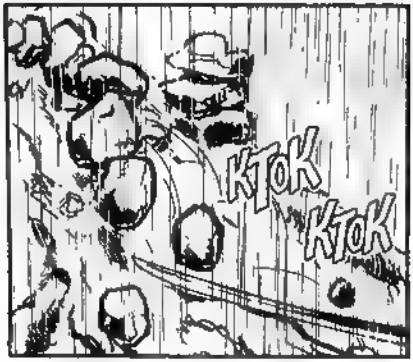
THROWING YOUR SWORD . . ON THE FIRST . PASS .?
NNGK!
N-NO TECHNIQUE. . LIKE THAT . . IN THE SUIŌ SCHOOL.

NO TECHNIQUE! NO SCHOOL!
NO SAMURAI HEART!

I HAVE ONLY . MEIFUMADŌ!

NNG...


SPLSH


KTOK
KTOK

KTOK
KNNK!

INCREDIBLE. ŌBAM-DONO THREW HIS DŌTANUKI TO CATCH BUNBEI IN MID-STROKE!
A HAIR'S-BREADTH CALCULATION! MISS, AND HE'D BE CUT IN HALF.
STEALING LIFE FROM DEATH

MangaProject.cjb.net
Scanner: Mavi

the twenty-fifth

# Executioner's Hill

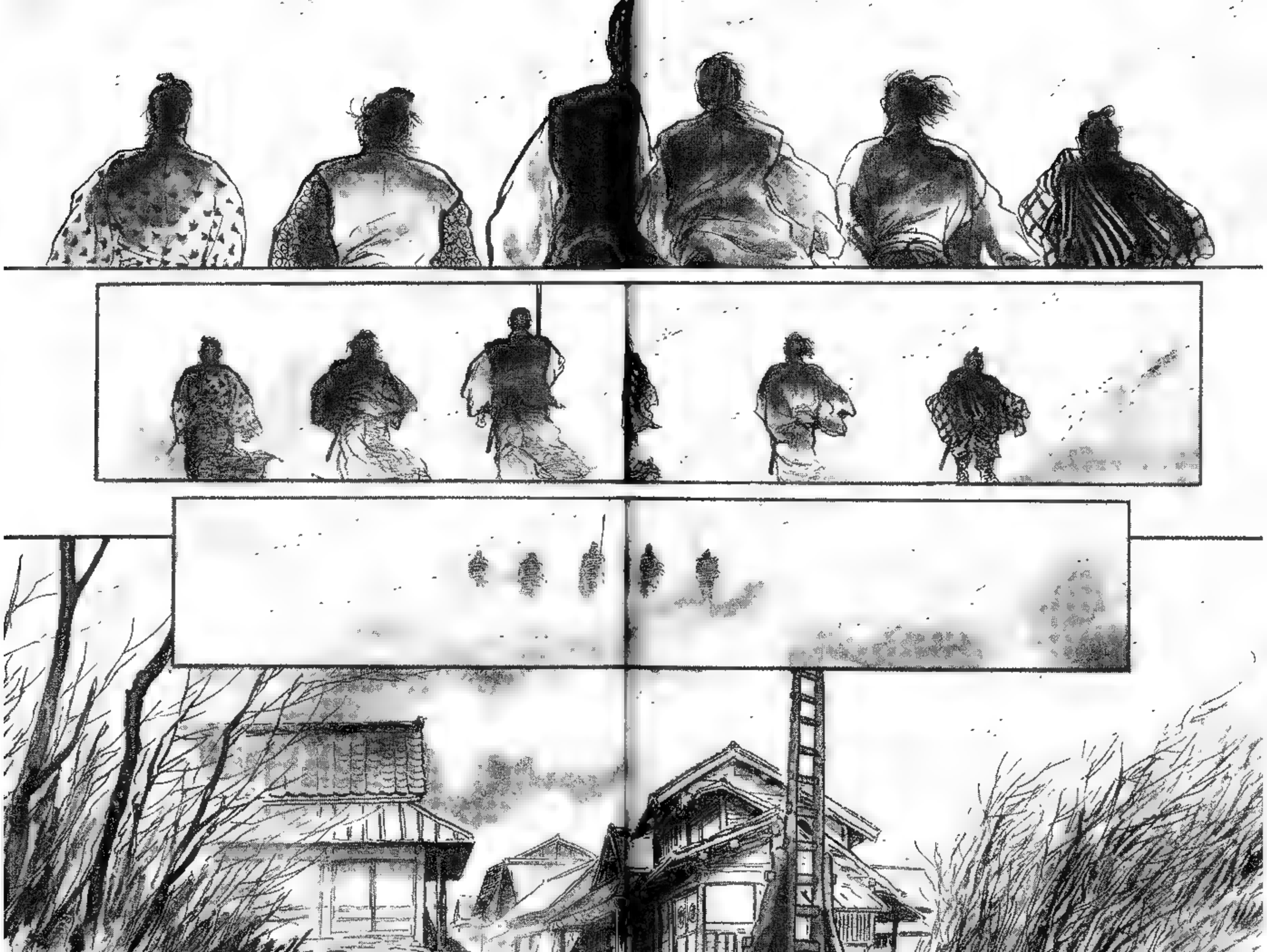
# 礼記

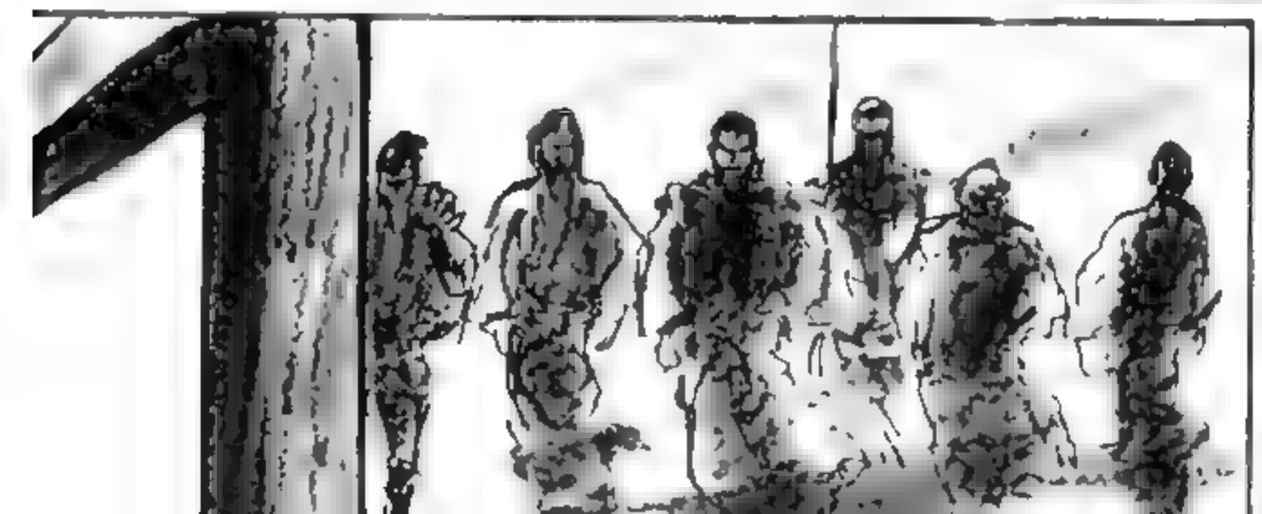
子曰く
楽はその自ら生ずる所を楽しむ
礼はその本を忘れず
古の人に言あり
曰く狼死して正しく丘に首するは
仁なり

楚辞
鳥は飛んで故郷に反り
狼は死するに必ず丘に首す

TRUE JOY IS TO TAKE PLEASURE
IN ONE'S OWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS;
COURTESY IS TO LEARN FROM THE MODELS OF THE PAST;
DID NOT THE ANCIENTS SAY, IN DEATH THE WOLF
TURNS HIS HEAD TOWARD THE HILLS?
THIS IS VIRTUE.

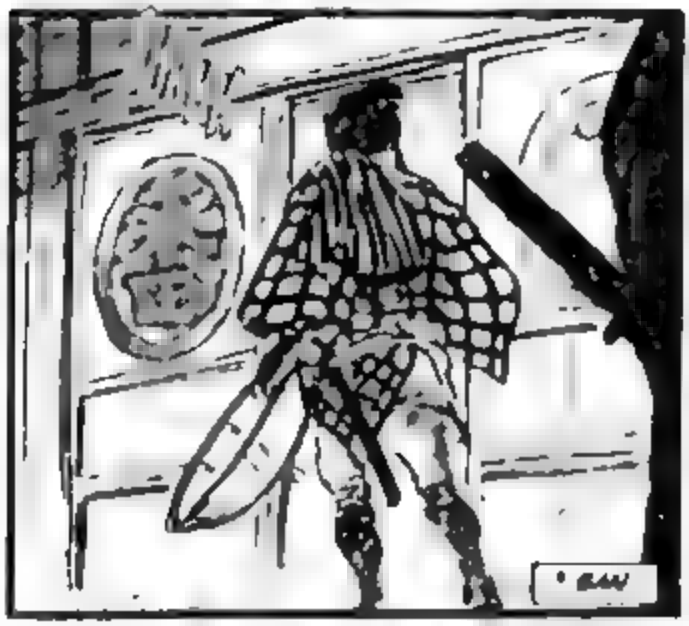
THE BIRDS FLY, RETURNING TO THEIR HOMELAND;
AND WITHOUT FAIL, THE DYING WOLF
TURNS HIS HEAD TOWARD THE HILLS.





WANTED

SHIT! THEY'RE NOT POSTING ANY NEW BOUNTIES ANYWHERE. PISSES ME OFF!



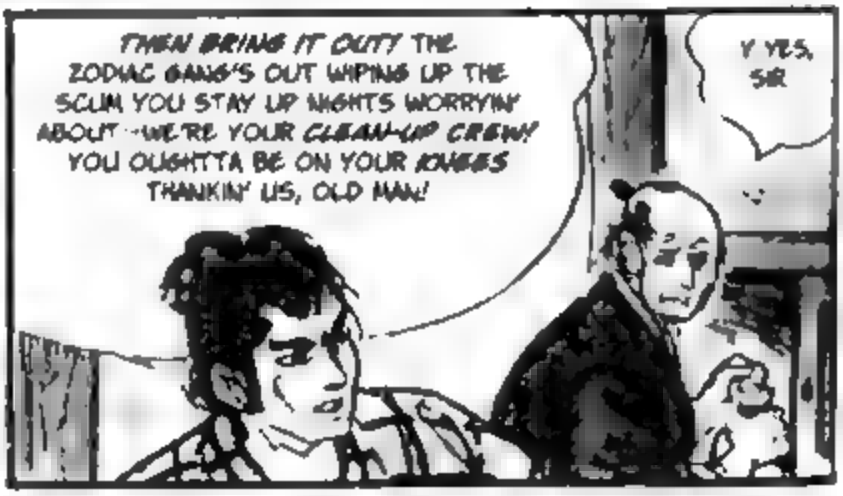
HEY! DON'T YOU GOT A TOWN BOSS OR SOMETHING?
N-NO, SIR. ONLY ME.

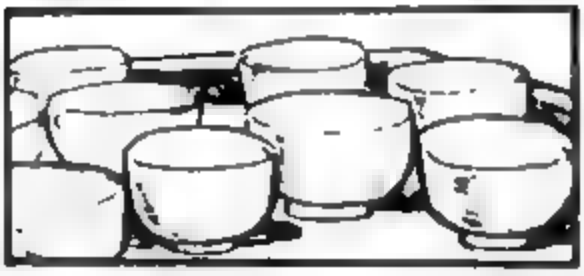
DAMN! ONE OLD FART OF A COPP WHAT A DUMP
MAY NEW BOUNTIES?
SORRY SIR THEY AIN'T POSTED ONE FOR ROLS NO, SIR

YOU GOT SAKE, RIGHT?
WH- WHO THE DICKENS ARE YOU?

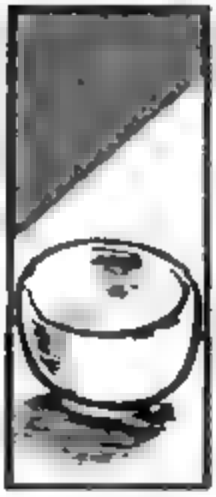
SHEE-IT! DON'T YA KNOW NOTHIN'? WE'RE THE ZODIAC GANG!
TH-THE ZODIAC GANG?!
THE B-B- BOUNTY HUNTERS ?!

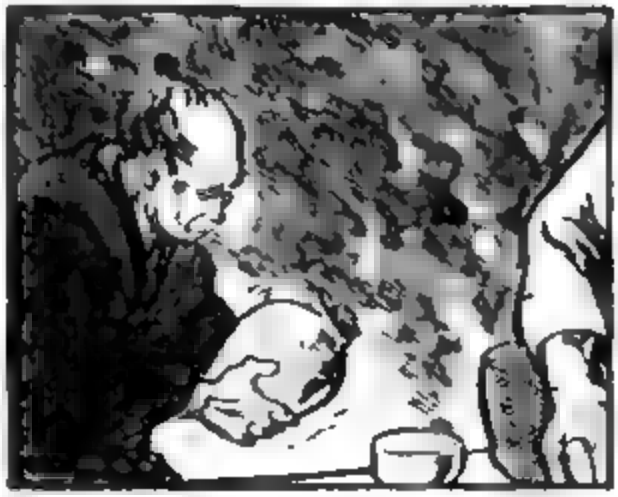
SO? SAKE IT!
J-JUST A DROP T' HELP ME SLEEP


THEN BRING IT OUT! THE ZODIAC GANG'S OUT WIPING UP THE SCUM YOU STAY UP NIGHTS WORRYIN' ABOUT --WE'RE YOUR CLEAN-UP CREW! YOU OUGHTTA BE ON YOUR KNEES THANKIN' US, OLD MAN!
Y YES, SIR



THAK



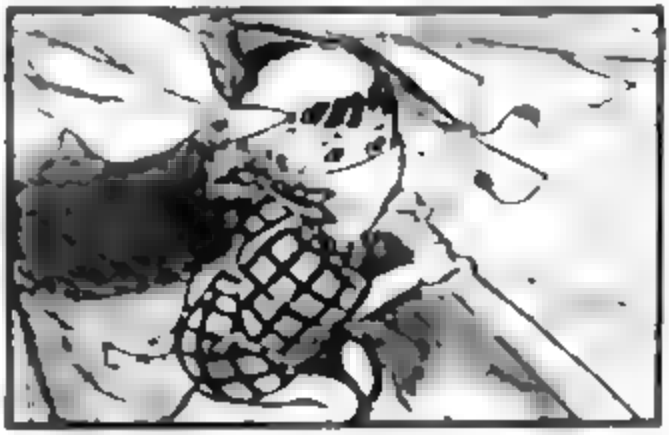


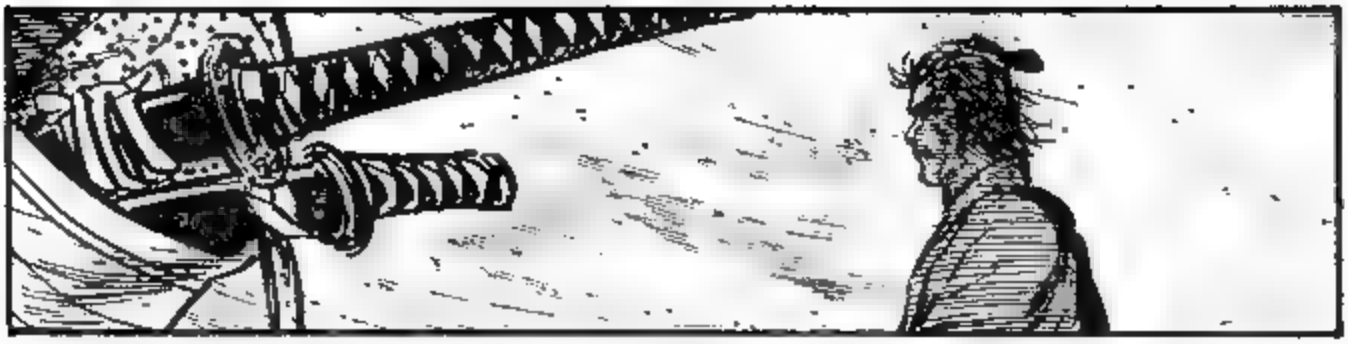
HEY, COPPER! AIN'T THERE *ANY* WORK HERE? BODYGUARDS, KILLINGS, WE DON'T CARE WHAT
THE KIND OF WORK THAT'D TAKE GENTS LIKE *YOU* ? NOT IN THESE PARTS, NO SIR!

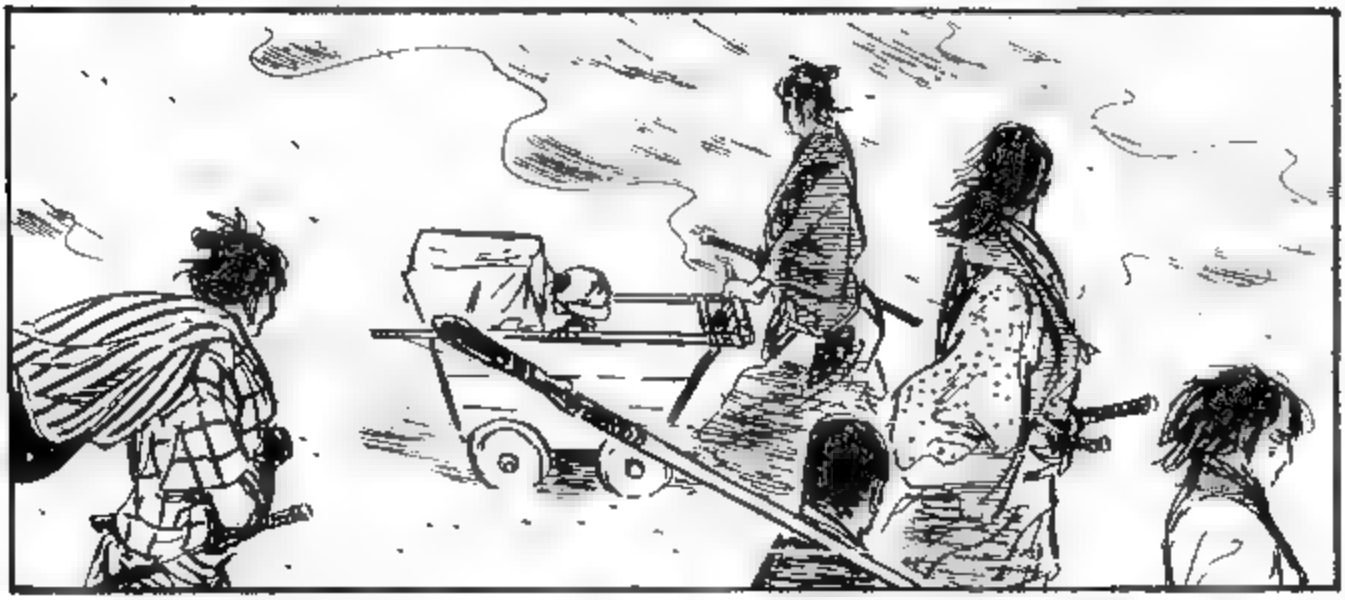
SHEE-IT WE AIN'T WORKED FOR *INGERS'S* WE'RE STONE BROKE, CAN'T EVEN MAKE A DAMN *LIVING!*

NOW WHAT, BOSS?
WE HAVE TO GO SOME-PLACE WHERE WE'RE NEEDED, THAT'S ALL.

WORLD'S GOTTEN TOO DAMN *PEACEFUL!* CAN'T DO *NOTHING* WITHOUT SOMEONE TO *KILL*. TAKES TWELVE TO MAKE A ZODIAC, AND *LOOK* AT US!
A DAMN *SIX-MONTH* "ZODIAC GANG"



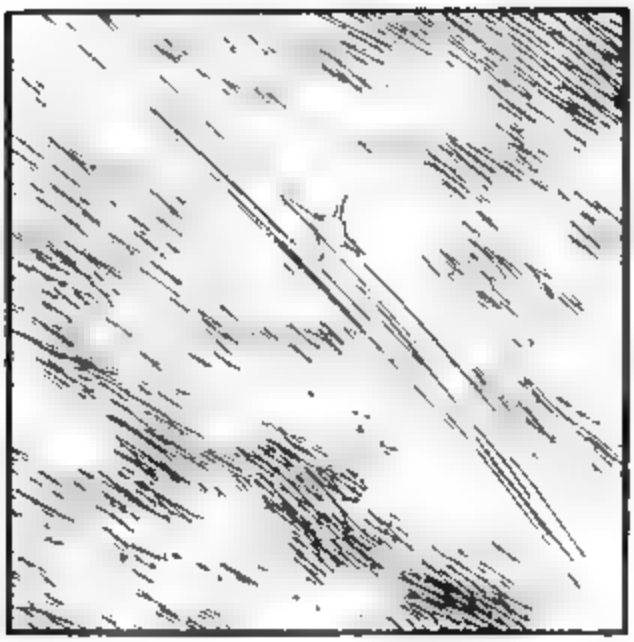


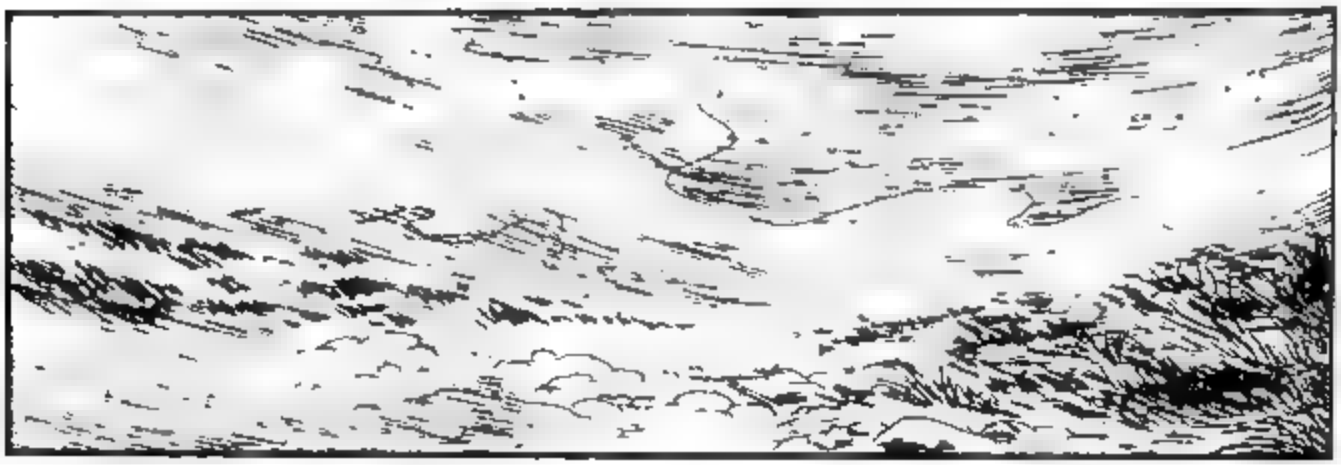


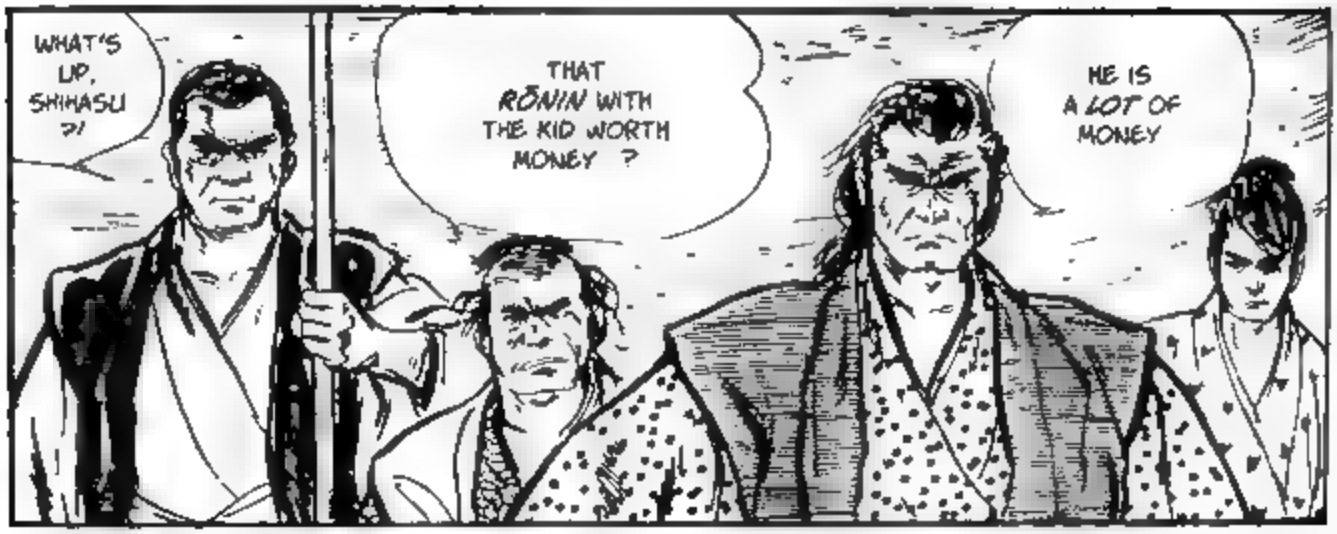
KEIMA! FOLLOW HIM.
BOSS ?!

WE JUST LANDED A FISH--A BIG ONE. TAIL THAT RŌNIN, AND FIND OUT WHERE HE'S SPENDING THE NIGHT
RIGHT! GOTCHA!

TO THINK I'D MEET YOU HERE. . NOW.



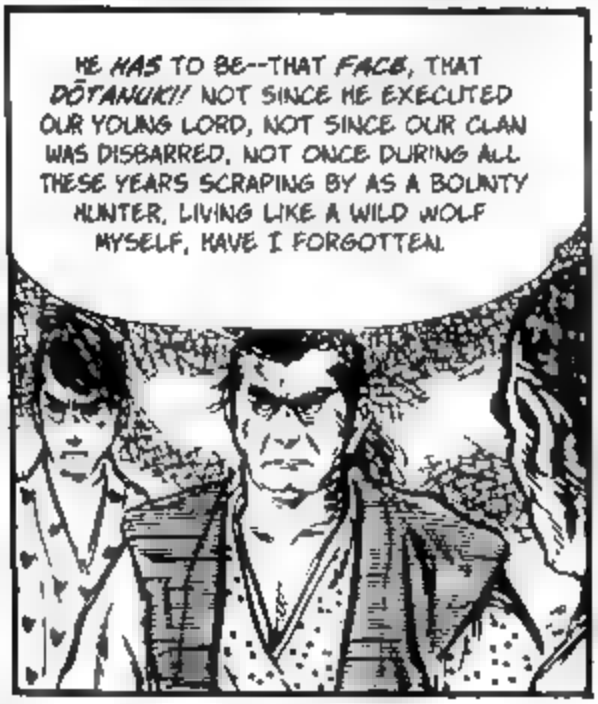



WHAT'S UP, SHIMASU ?!
THAT *RŌNIN* WITH THE KID WORTH MONEY ?
HE IS A *LOT* OF MONEY

THAT IS, IF HE'S *REALLY* ŌGAMI ITTŌ, THE FORMER *KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN* EXECUTIONER!

WHAT?!

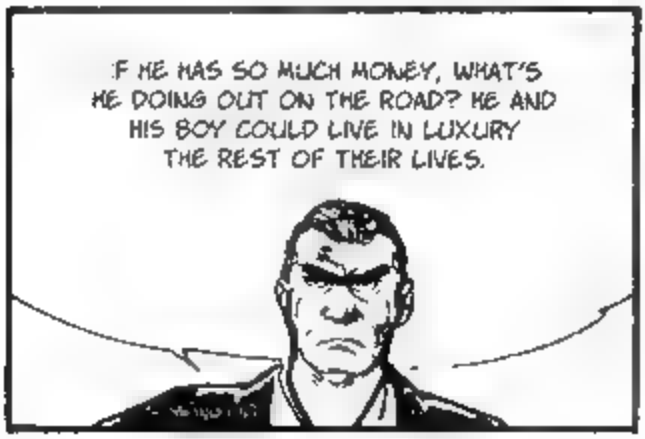
I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT HIM. THEY SAY HE LOST A FEUD WITH THE YAGYŪ CLAN, AND HAS BEEN WANDERING THE COUNTRY AS A HIRED ASSASSIN. *LONE WOLF AND CUB*, PEOPLE CALL HIM. BUT I HARDLY BELIEVE
LONE WOLF AND *CUB*?!
ARE YOU *SURE*?!
THAT GUY WITH THE *KID* JUST NOW?!

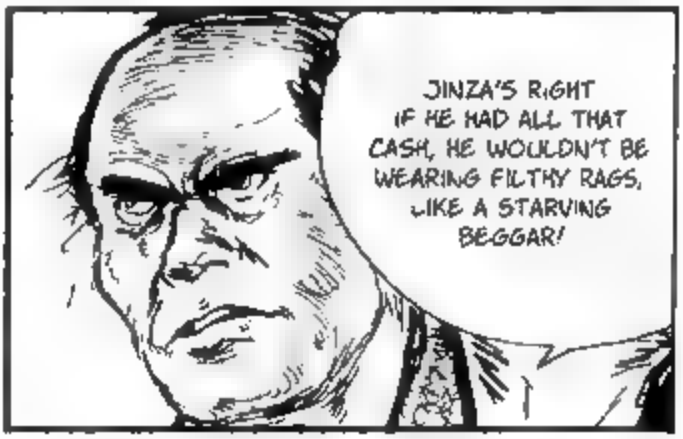

HE *HAS* TO BE--THAT *FACE*, THAT *DŌTANUKI*!! NOT SINCE HE EXECUTED OUR YOUNG LORD, NOT SINCE OUR CLAN WAS DISBARRED, NOT ONCE DURING ALL THESE YEARS SCRAPING BY AS A BOUNTY HUNTER, LIVING LIKE A WILD WOLF MYSELF, HAVE I FORGOTTEN.

I COULD NOT FORGET HIM IF I *WANTED* TO!

I SEE NO PROFIT WHEN STARVING WOLVES FIGHT IN THE DUST

AGAIN, IT'S ONLY RUMOR BUT PEOPLE ALSO SAY HE GETS FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ PER KILLING
KILL TEN MEN... FIVE THOUSAND RYŌ! TWENTY MEN. TEN THOUSAND RYŌ!
THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN CARRY IT WITH HIM.


IF HE HAS SO MUCH MONEY, WHAT'S HE DOING OUT ON THE ROAD? HE AND HIS BOY COULD LIVE IN LUXURY THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.


JINZA'S RIGHT IF HE HAD ALL THAT CASH, HE WOULDN'T BE WEARING FILTHY RAGS, LIKE A STARVING BEGGAR!

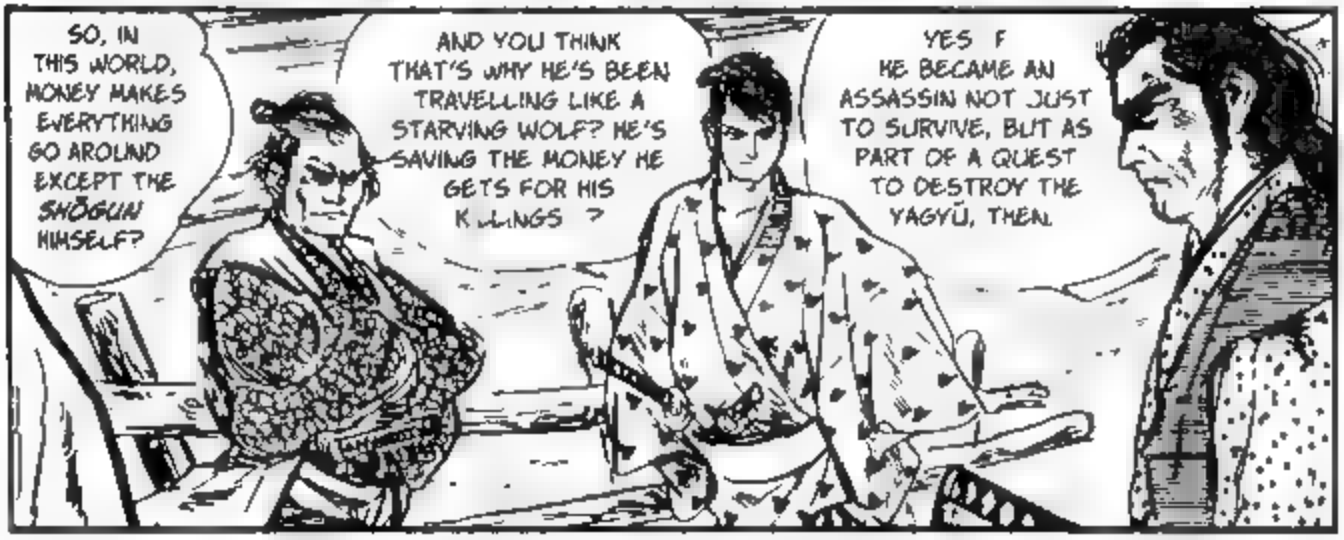
BECAUSE IT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN TEN THOUSAND RYŌ TO DESTROY THE YAGYŪ.

WHAT?!
JUST TO GET THINGS GOING, HE'D HAVE TO SLIP AT LEAST FIVE THOUSAND INTO THE RIGHT HANDS IN THE SHŌGUNATE

AND THEN, IF HE WANTED THE SHŌGUN'S PERMISSION TO RE-ESTABLISH THE ŌGAM. CLAN, HE'D HAVE TO FIGHT THE YAGYŪ THEM-SELVES.
..LEAVING ALL TO HIS CHILD SHOULD HE DIE IN BATTLE.
I GET IT FIRST, PAY OFF THE SHŌGUNATE TO INVESTIGATE THE YAGYŪ.. HMM.

MAKES SENSE.

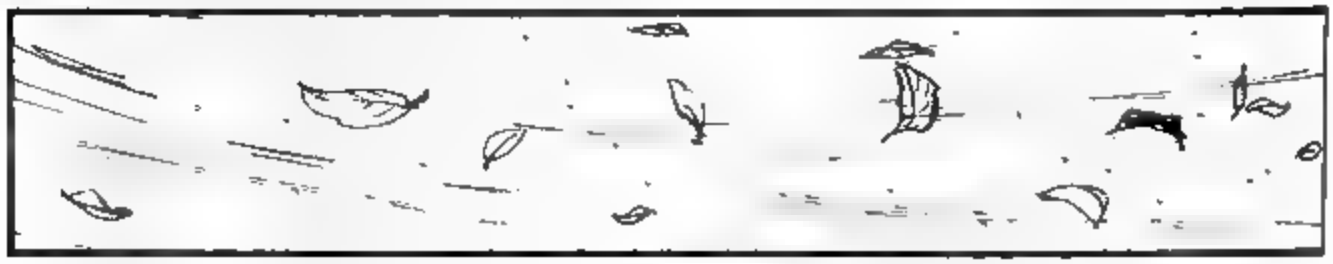
WITH FIFTY THOUSAND RYŌ, WE OURSELVES MIGHT HAVE INFLUENCED THE RŌJŪ, AND SAVED OUR HAN
MM.


SO, IN THIS WORLD, MONEY MAKES EVERYTHING GO AROUND EXCEPT THE SHŌGUN HIMSELF?
AND YOU THINK THAT'S WHY HE'S BEEN TRAVELLING LIKE A STARVING WOLF? HE'S SAVING THE MONEY HE GETS FOR HIS K LLINGS ?
YES F HE BECAME AN ASSASSIN NOT JUST TO SURVIVE, BUT AS PART OF A QUEST TO DESTROY THE YAGYŪ, THEN.

THEN THERE IS MONEY!

RIGHT!

LET'S DO IT!



NOW, THIS IS THE MAN THEY PICKED TO BE *SHŌGUN'S EXECUTIONER*

HIS *SUIŌ* SCHOOL *ZANBATŌ* STROKE IS SUPPOSED TO BE STRONGER THAN THE SWORDS OF THE YAGYŪ.

MEANING: EVEN SHIMASU IKKAKU'S *MUGAI-RYŪ ZANJINKEN* TECHNIQUE CAN'T DEFEAT HIM?

NOT EVEN WITH SHIMOZUKI JINZA'S *GEKKAN-RYŪ* SHORT SPEAR AT MY SIDE!

THEN THE FIVE OF US TAKE HIM *TOGETHER!*

REMEMBER, WE'RE NOT OUT TO *KILL*

OUR FIRST OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE HIM TELL US WHERE TO FIND THE GOLD

WHY DON'T WE TAKE THE *BOY?*

YES. THAT'S OUR BEST CHOICE. IF HE'S OUT TO REBUILD HIS CLAN, HE MUST PLAN TO LEAVE EVERYTHING TO HIS SON. IF HE LOSES THE BOY, IT'S ALL OVER.

WE SIT HERE PLANNING A KIDNAPPING. .? HOW PATHETIC! WE SHOULD DECIDE IT BY *FORCE OF ARMS!*

PUT IT BEHIND YOU, JINZA! *FORGET* YOUR *SAMURAI* PRIDE.

WHAT WE WANT ISN'T *BATTLE*--

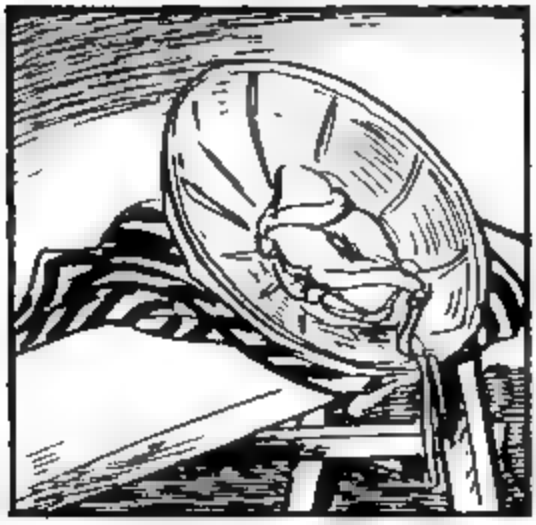
--IT'S *MONEY* !!

THE MONEY OF THE *WOLF*

.THAT'S *ALL* WE WANT!

TAK KTAK

WHOOSH!



HE'S HOLED UP IN A HUT BY THE MIZUMIRAI RIVER.
GUESS HE FIGURED IT WASN'T WORTH FIGHTING THIS DUST STORM.
GOOD

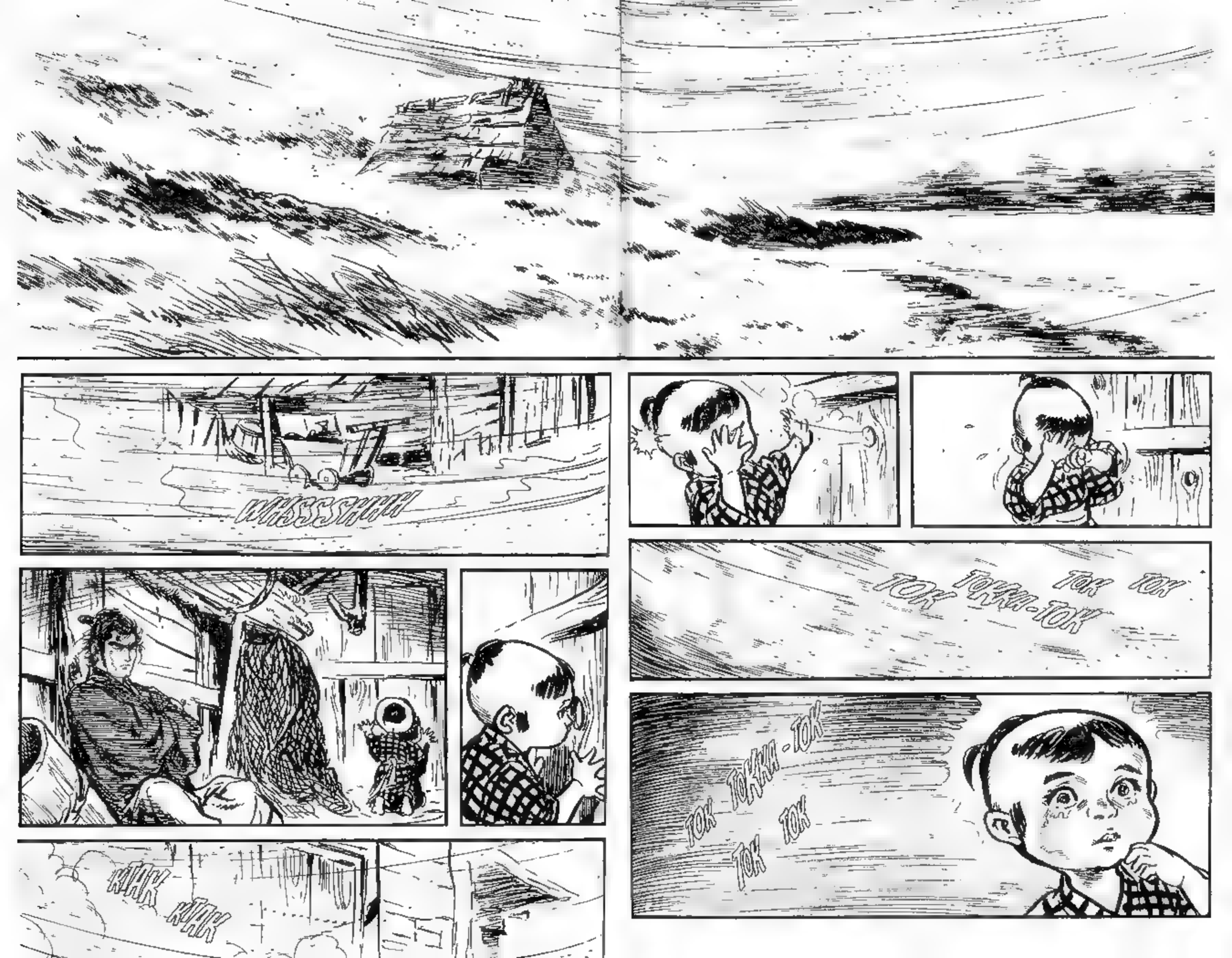
GIN-NO-JI!

YEAH, BOSS?
FWIP
FWIP

HOW WOULD YOU CAPTURE THAT BOY HE'S WITH?

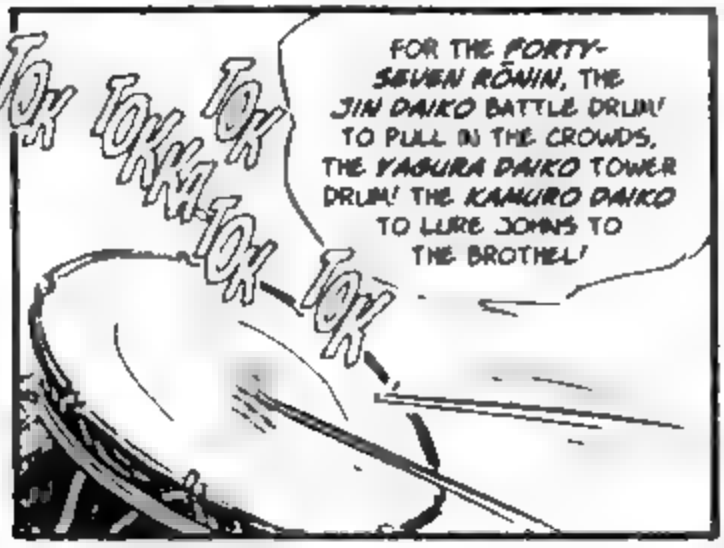
HACHK

IF *THAT'S* WHAT YA WANT, LEAVE IT TO ME!
YOU CATCH A KID WITH *SOUND*, THAT'S WHAT! *HEH HEH HEH.* WAIT AND SEE!

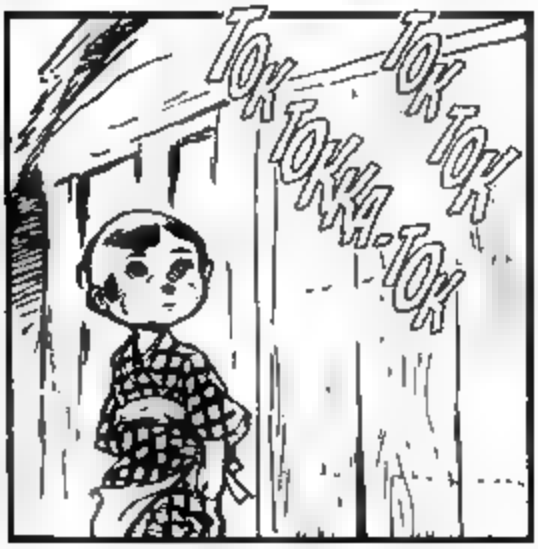

WHSSSHH
TOK TOKKA-TOK TOK TOK
TOK TOKKA-TOK TOK TOK
KHK KHK

TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK

TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK
IF YOU'RE DRIVING BEASTS IN THE BUSH, BEAT THE *OYEBKO DAIKO* HUNTER'S DRUM!


TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK
FOR THE *FORTY-SEVEN RŌNIN*, THE *JIN DAIKO* BATTLE DRUM! TO PULL IN THE CROWDS, THE *YAGURA DAIKO* TOWER DRUM! THE *KANKIRO DAIKO* TO LURE JOHNS TO THE BROTHEL!

TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK
TO CATCH A KID? *AMELIE DAIKO*, THE BEAT OF THE *CANDY SELLER'S DRUM*!!


TOK
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TOKKA-
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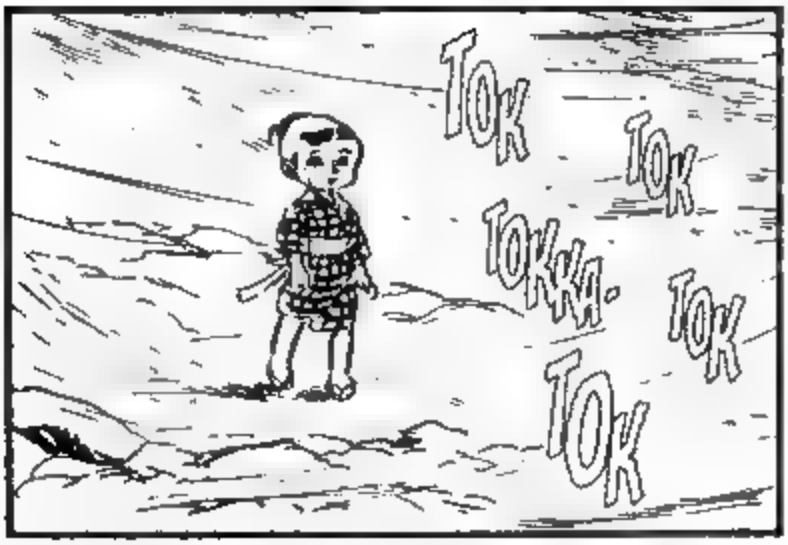
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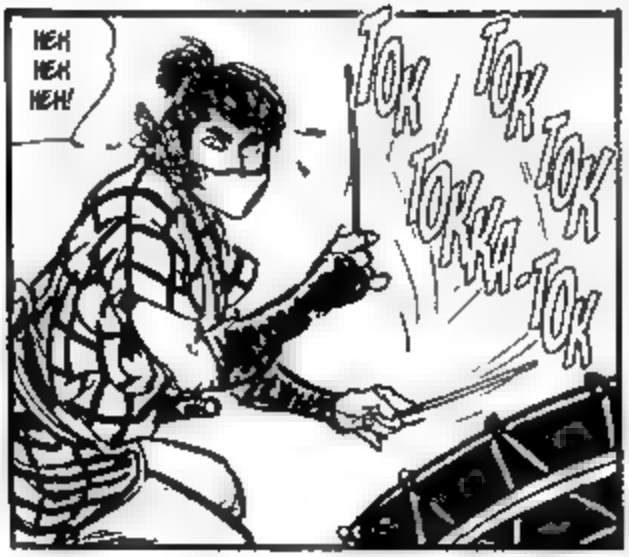
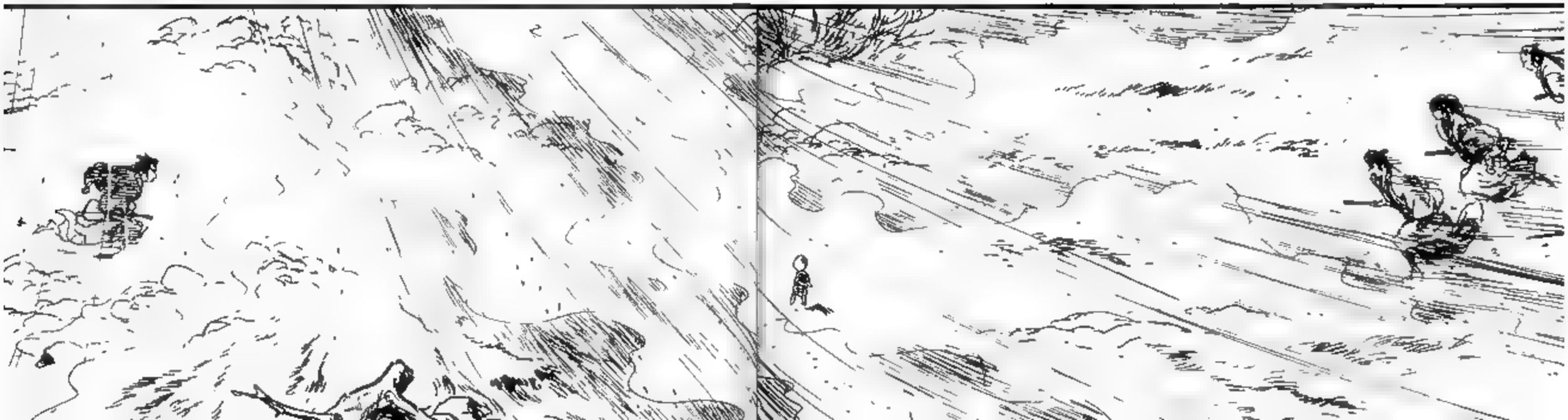

HEH
HEH
HEH!
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOKKA-
TOK

TOKKA-TOK
TOK TOK TOK
TOK TOK!

NOW!!

RRUS!

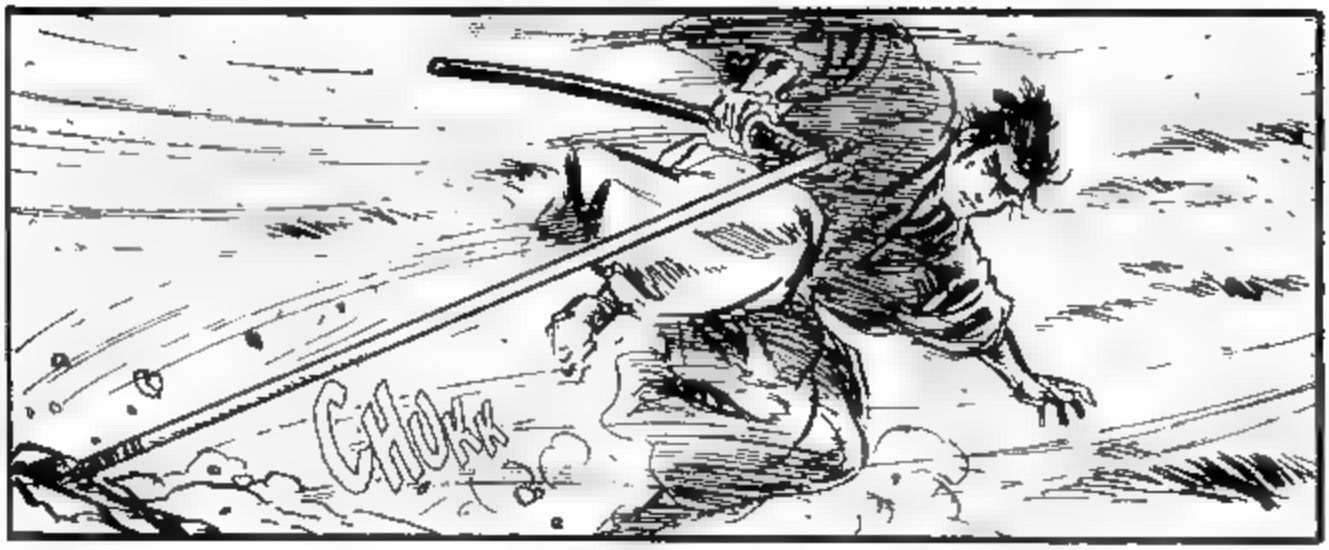
LEAVE THE WOLF TO ME!
YOU GET THE CUB!



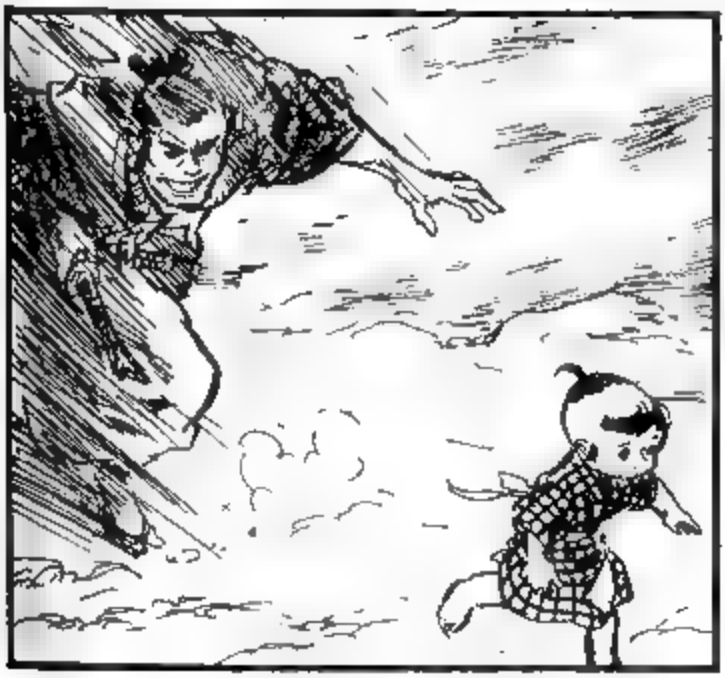
RYAA!!

FWHTT

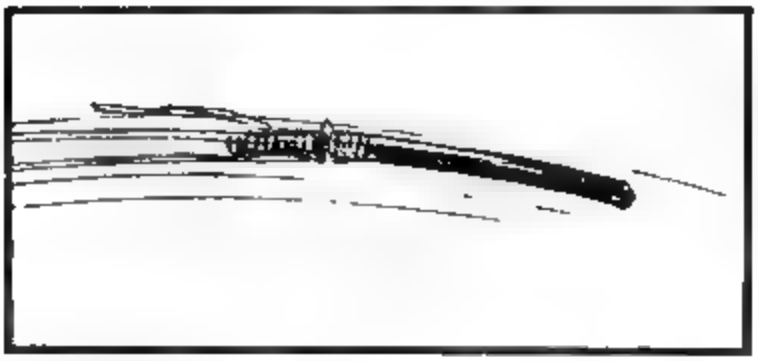
HYAH!

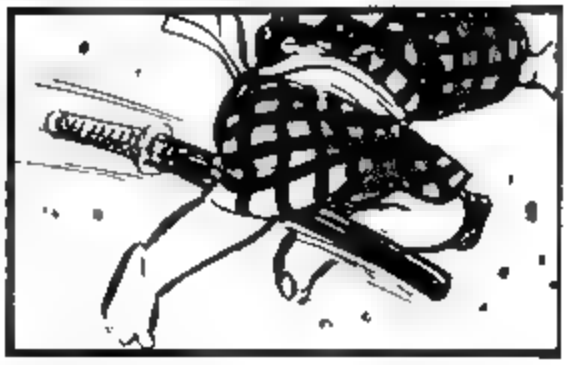

CHOKK

NNG!!



OW!!





COME ON, KID-- GIVE IT UP!
MNNG! MNNG!

WHAT A SURPRISE, ŌGAMI-DONO.
HEH HEH HEH
....
....

I DOUBT YOU REMEMBER *MY* FACE, BUT *YOURS* IS ONE I'LL *NEVER* FORGET!
YOU TOLD OUR YOUNG LORD TO PUT HIS FAN TO HIS STOMACH, AND THEN THAT *DŌTANUKI* YOU'RE CARRYING CHOPPED OFF HIS HEAD BEFORE MY VERY *EYES!*

IF WE CUT OFF *YOUR* BOY'S HEAD, WE'LL JUST BE FOLLOWING OUR LORD'S DYING WISHES!

....
....

BUT IN THIS HARDSCRABBLE WORLD, *FEALTY* WON'T PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE!
GIVE US THE GOLD YOU'VE GOTTEN FROM YOUR KILLINGS, AND *WE'LL* LET BYGONES BE BYGONES.

*WELL?!* WHAT SAY YOU?!

....
....

WHISSSH!

WHERE IS THE MONEY?! SPEAK!
LOSE YOUR CHILD, AND YOUR QUEST IS LOST AS WELL!

YOU CAN ALWAYS GET MORE MONEY
COME ON--WE'VE ALREADY WON!

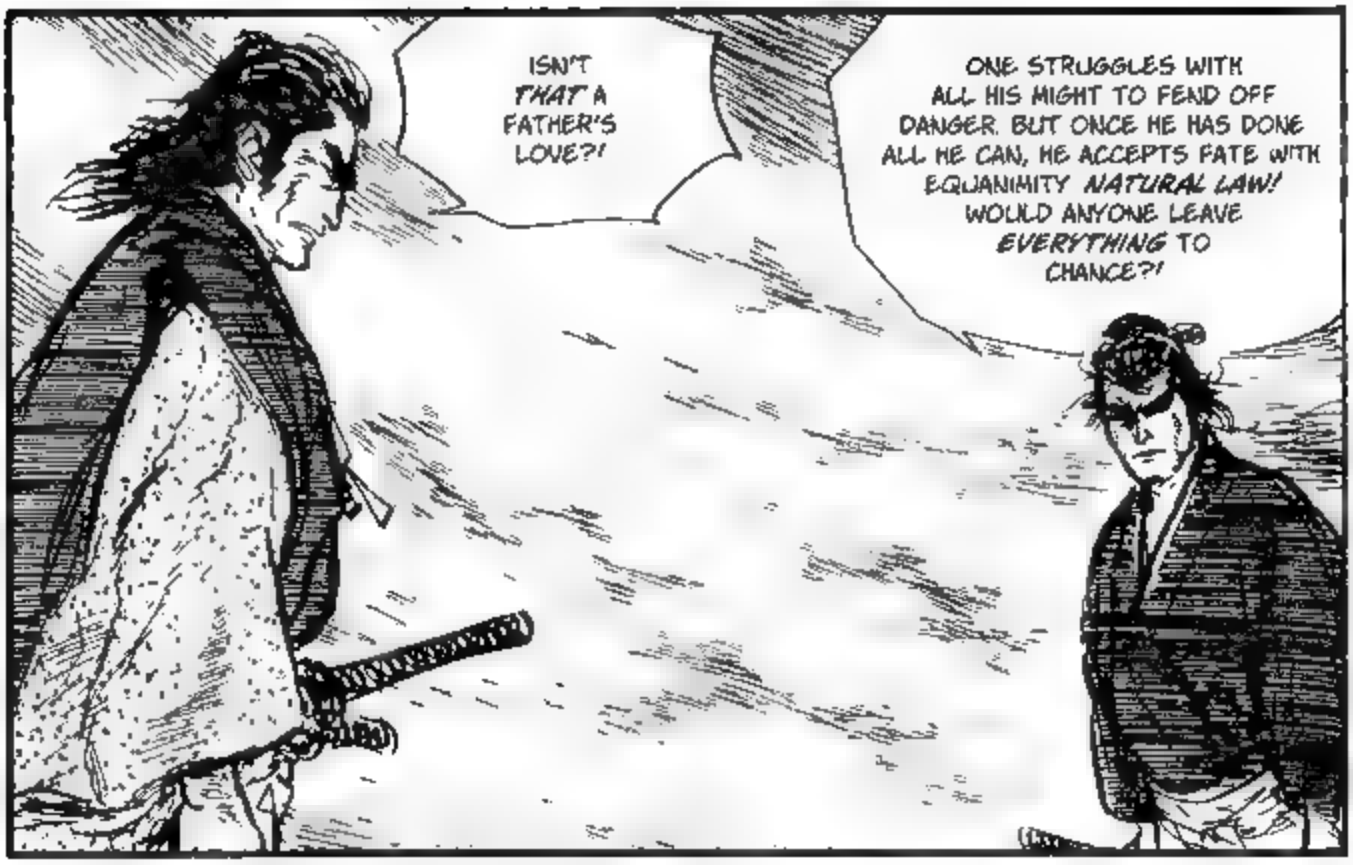
WELL, ŌGAMI ITTŌ?!
I REFUSE.

WHAT?! YOU DON'T CARE IF WE HACK OFF HIS HEAD?!
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN DO IT, GO AHEAD
BUT IT WILL BRING YOU NOTHING.
W-WHAT?!
YOU THINK WE'RE BLUFFING?!
NO. I DO NOT BUT MY SON DIES. WE FIGHT
AND WHAT REMAINS? CORPSES IN THE SAND.

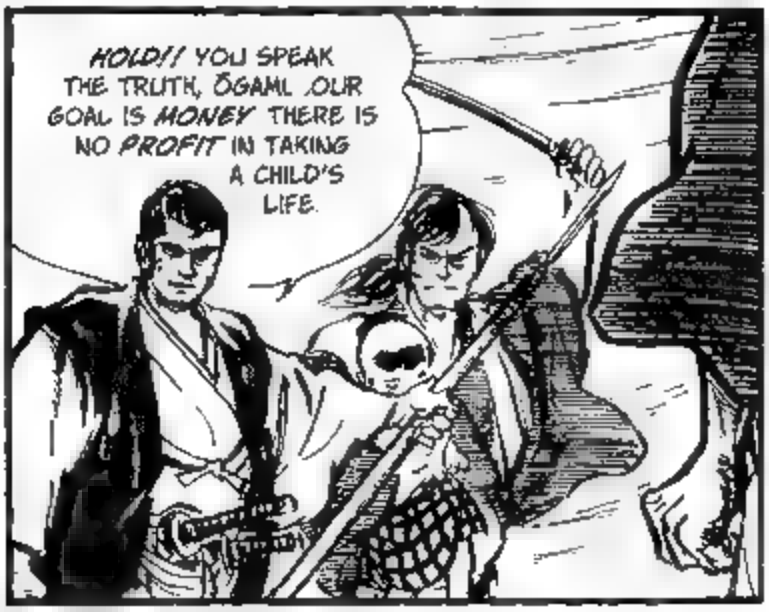
YOU WANT ONLY MONEY KILLING THE CHILD WILL NOT GET YOU ANY
YET IT IS A FATHER'S NATURE TO DEFEND THE LIFE OF HIS CHILD ALL THE MORE SO WHEN YOUR QUEST HANGS ON THAT BOND

NO. WE LIVE IN *MEIFUMADŌ*, FATHER AND SON *TOGETHER!*
UNDER-STANDING FROM THE BEGINNING THAT WE DEFY THE RULES OF *RIKU-DŌ SHISHŌ*, THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES!

IF WE LOSE EVERYTHING IN THIS PLACE, THEN SUCH WAS OUR FATE ON THIS DEMONS' ROAD *SO BE IT!*
?! THEN ONE QUESTION!
WHEN YOU SAW YOUR SON WAS IN DANGER, WHY RUSH TO HIS DEFENSE?!


ISN'T *THAT* A FATHER'S LOVE?!
ONE STRUGGLES WITH ALL HIS MIGHT TO FEND OFF DANGER. BUT ONCE HE HAS DONE ALL HE CAN, HE ACCEPTS FATE WITH EQUANIMITY *NATURAL LAW!* WOULD ANYONE LEAVE *EVERYTHING* TO CHANCE?!

*ENOUGH CRAP!*
I'LL *KILL* THE BRAT!! I *WILL!*


*HOLD!!* YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH, ŌGAMI. OUR GOAL IS *MONEY*. THERE IS NO *PROFIT* IN TAKING A CHILD'S LIFE.

TO LIVE IN *MEIFUMADŌ* ACCEPTING ALL THE REVERSALS OF *RIKUDŌ SHISHŌ*.

IT BRINGS IT ALL BACK, DOESN'T IT ? THERE WAS A TIME WHEN *I* CURSED THE *SHŌGUN*
I SWORE I'D LIVE BY *MEIFUMADŌ* AND ATTACK THE *SHŌGUN'S* PROCESSION ALL ALONE, IF THAT'S WHAT IT TOOK TO AVENGE OUR LORD.

PTEH!

BUT A YEAR WENT BY .THEN ANOTHER. .DAY AFTER DAY, HOW TO GET FOOD, WHERE TO FIND SHELTER, HOW TO MAKE IT TO TOMORROW.

AND NOW LOOK AT ME! I CAN HARDLY EVEN REMEMBER OUR LORD'S FACE

W-WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU GUYS?! HURRY UP AND KILL HIM! HE'S JUST SETTING YOU UP!!
HE'S TRYING TO TRAP YOU WITH WORDS! THE GUY'S USING HIS TONGUE LIKE A SWORD!

SILENCE!!

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ?! IT MEANS LETTING YOUR OWN KID DECIDE WHETHER TO LIVE OR DIE!
IT MEANS IF YOUR CHILD CHOOSES DEATH, YOU KILL HIM WITH YOUR OWN HANDS!

IT'S MORE PAINFUL TO LIVE THAN TO DIE! HOW MUCH EASIER TO SLEEP FOREVER.
YOU'RE A YAKUZA! DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE NEVER FELT THAT WAY! EH?!
....
....

WHISSHH
WHISSHH

AN ASSASSIN WITH A CHILD.
IT MUST BE LIKE HAVING SHACKLES ON YOUR ARMS AND LEGS. BUT IF YOU ALREADY WALK IN MEIFUMADŌ, IT ALL MAKES SENSE.

BUT .. IT'S TOO LATE TO TURN BACK.

RELEASE THE BOY!
B-BUT

WE MIS-CALCULATED NO MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR GOLD
. . . .
. . . .

HOWEVER
IF WE TAKE YOUR HEAD TO YOUR ENEMIES, THERE'S MONEY IN THAT!

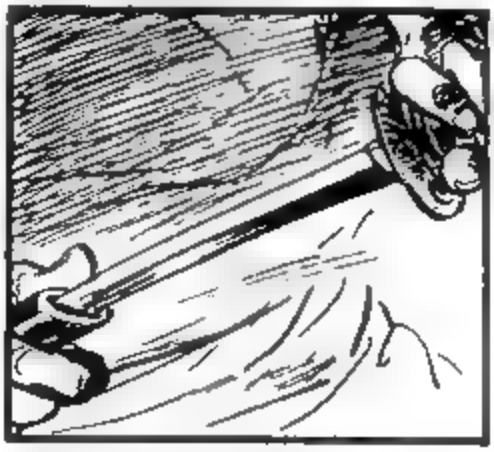
YEAH! THE YAGYŪ WOULD PAY A FORTUNE!
YOU'RE RIGHT! I DIDN'T SEE IT BEFORE. .THE HEAD OF ŌGAMI ITTŌ THAT WE CAN SELL!
HEH HEH WE'RE BOUNTY HUNTERS, ANYWAY!

SO THIS IS MORE LIKE IT!

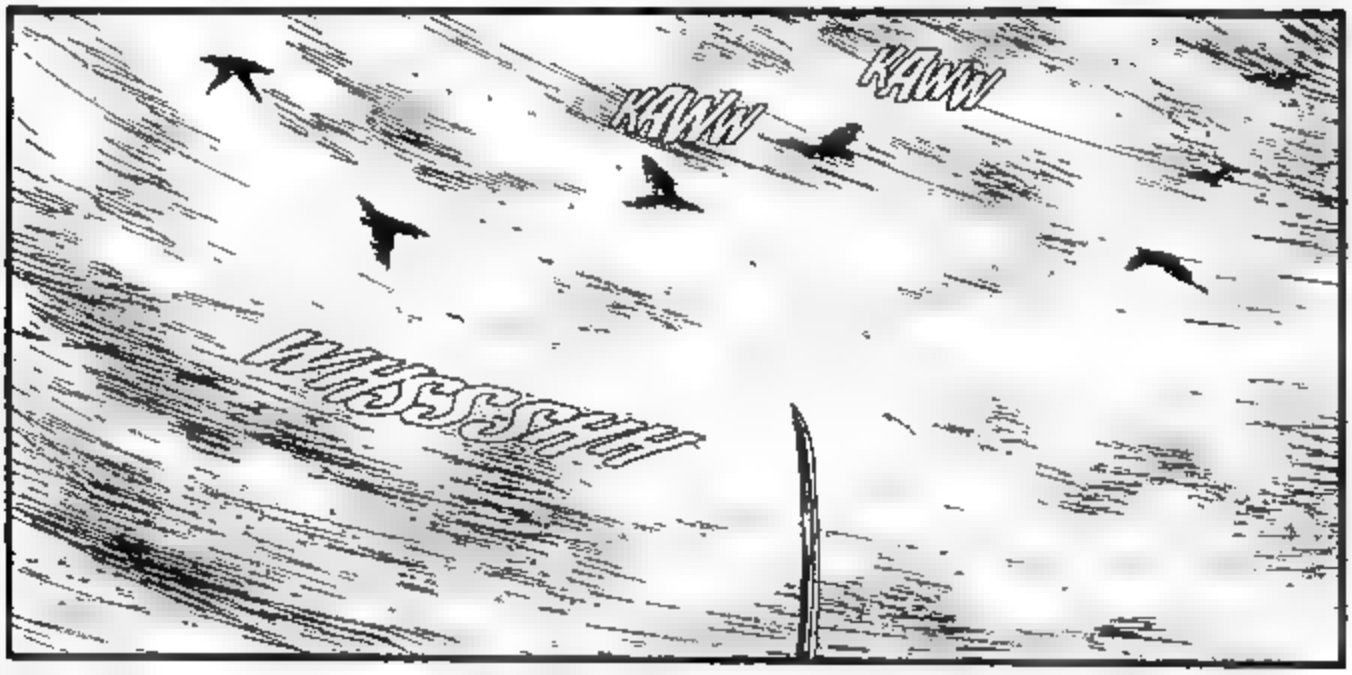
WE'LL HAVE THAT HEAD!
SHIHASU IKKAKU! MUGAI-RYŪ!
SHIMOZUKI JINZA! GEKKAI RYŪ!
KEIMA-NO-GINJ!

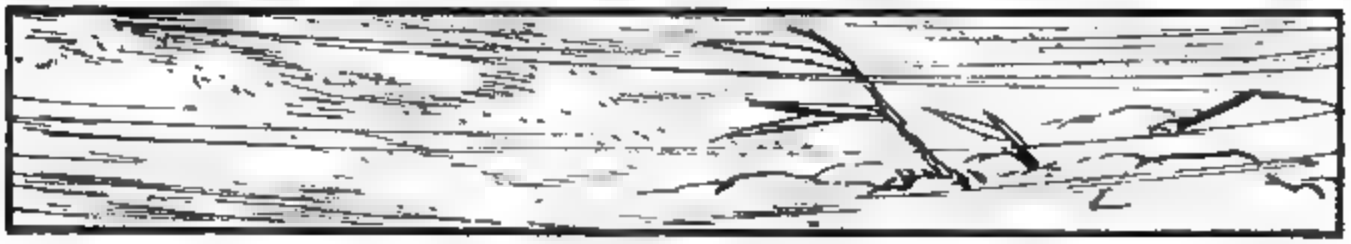
SAMIDARE TANBA!
MINAZUKI TSUESUKE!
SHIGURE UKYŌ!

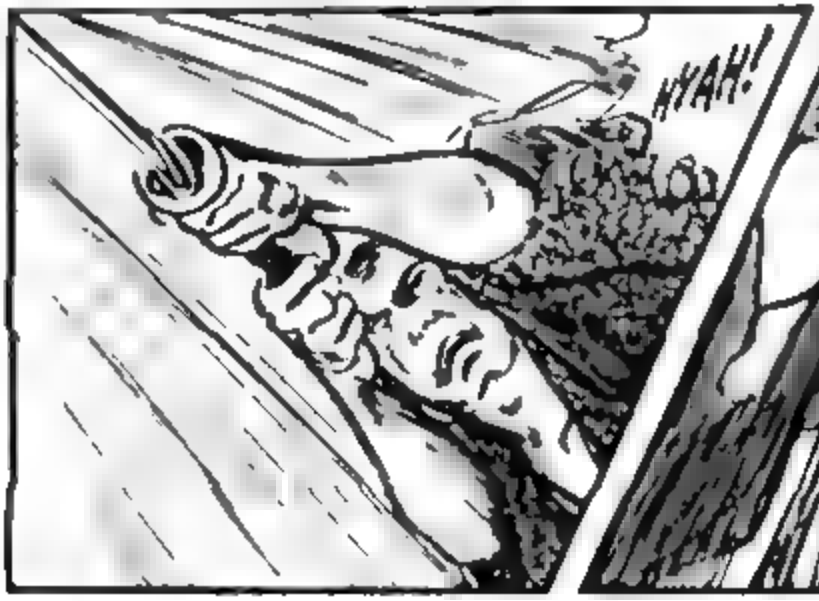
ŌGAMI ITTŌ..



SUIŌ-RYŪ!


KAWW
KAWW
WHSSSH!




HYAH!

HA'G'G!

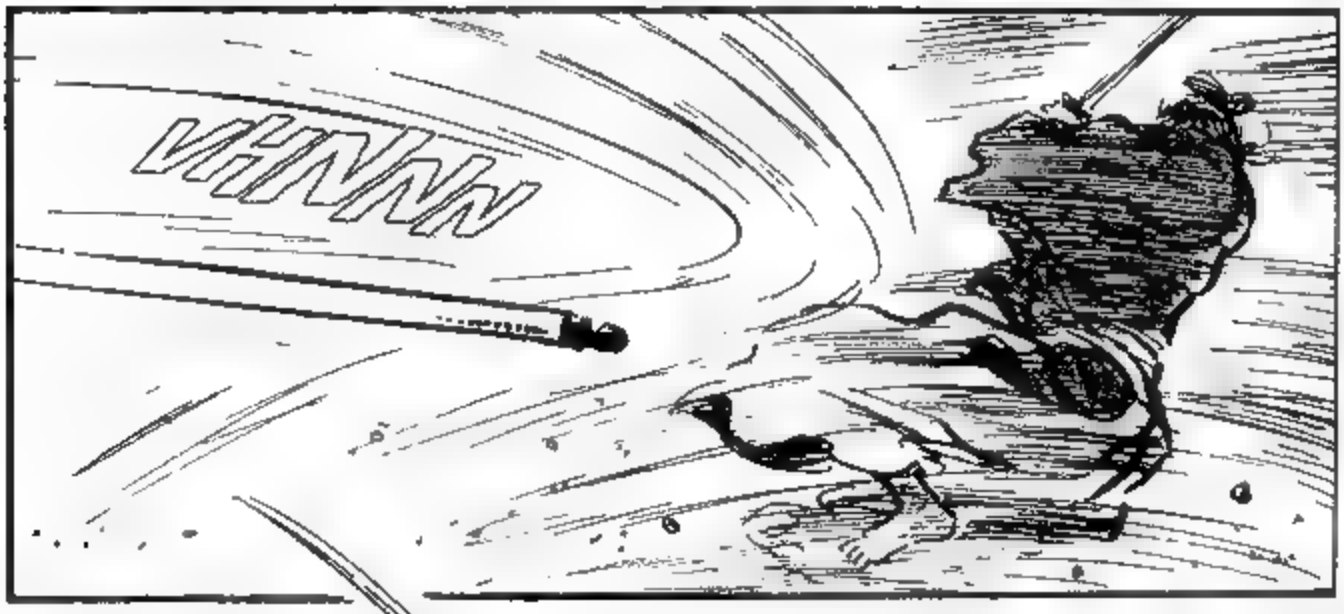
SKSSH

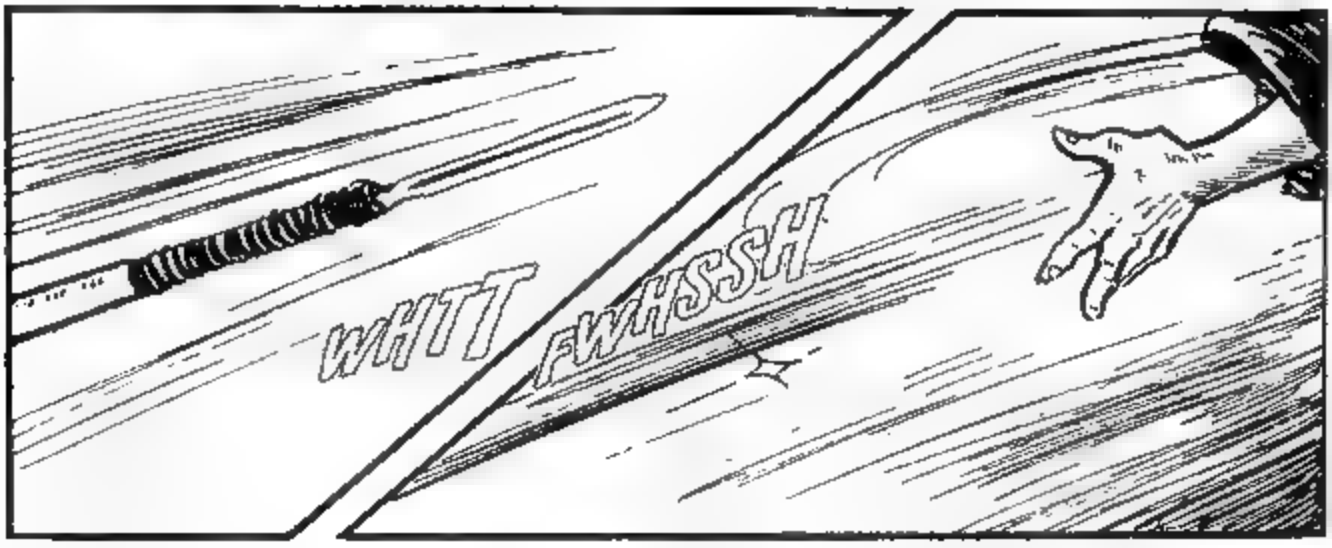



SHAKKK


CLANG

THAP


VHVNN


WHTT
FWHSSH

WSSH
BYAAAH!

THUKK
NGGRK!

UIRNN..
NNNG .

HYAH!

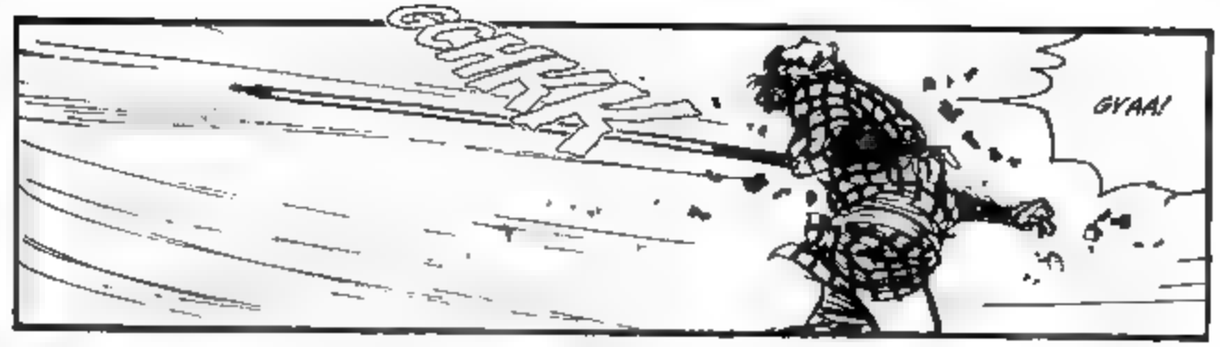
KCHAK

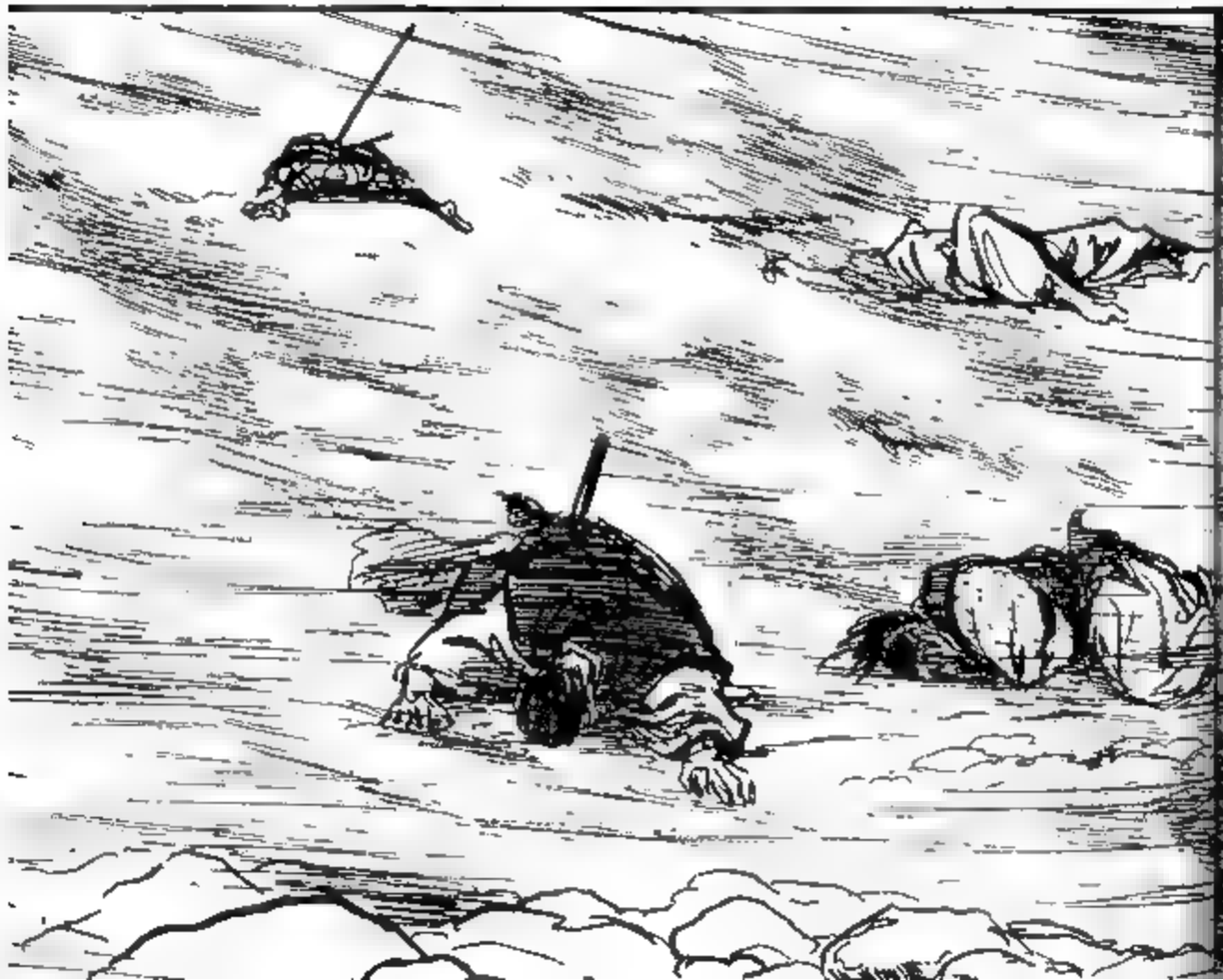
SSI

SHUKK
HRRG!
NNG

AAA!!

AIEEEE!!!


GYAA!



PAPA !
WHSSSSH!!
WHSSSSH!!
THE BIRDS FLY, RETURNING TO THEIR HOMELAND... WITHOUT FAIL, THE DYING WOLF TURNS HIS HEAD TOWARD THE HILLS.
BUT AROUND THIS FATED FATHER AND HIS CHILD, THE WILD DOGS GATHER, READY TO SAVAGE EVEN THOSE WILD WINGS; EVEN THAT WOLF IN DEATH..

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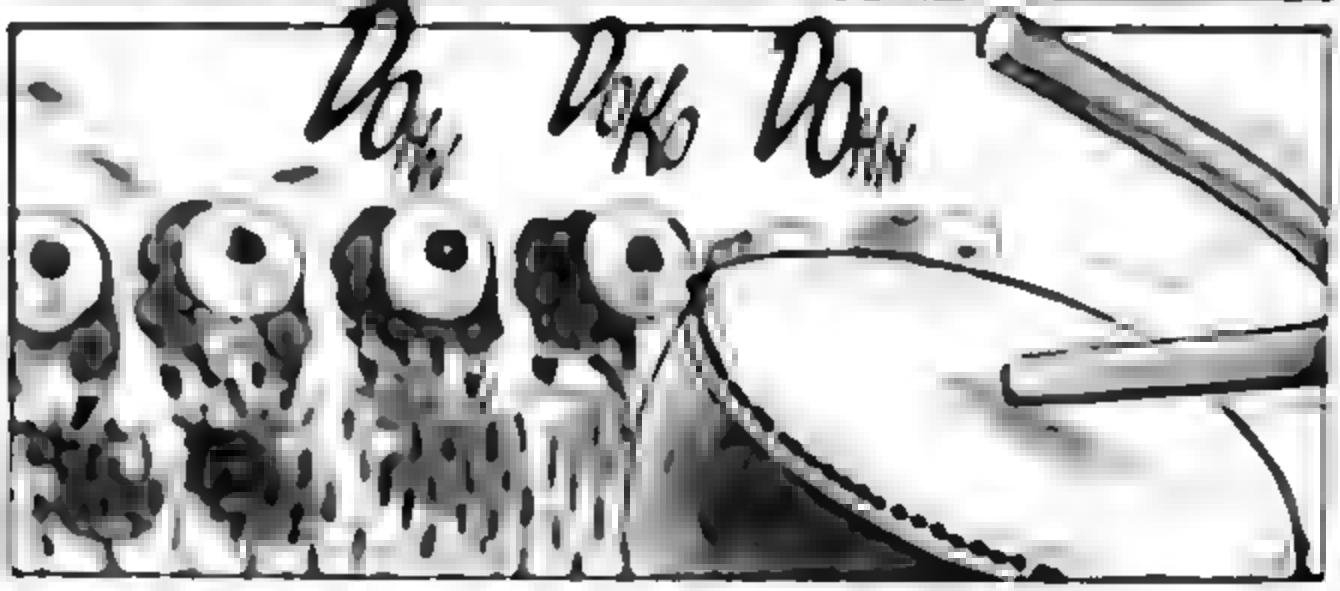
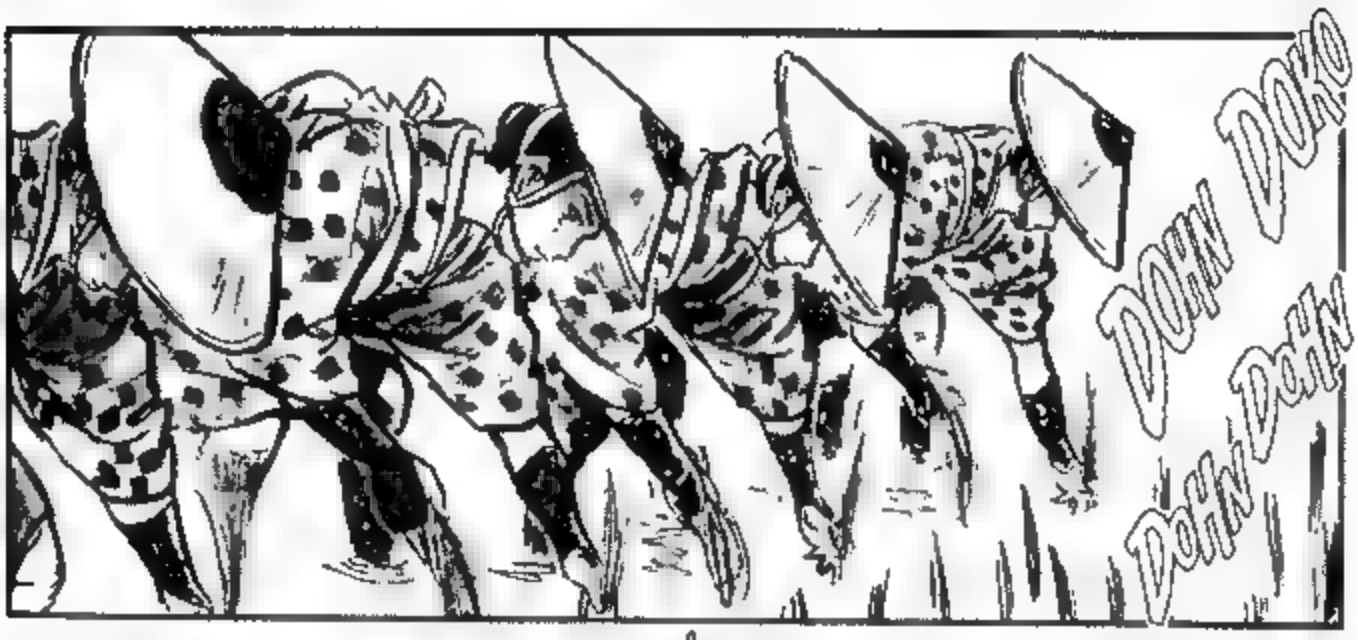
the twenty-sixth

# Black Wind

DOKO DOHN
DOKO DOHN
DOHN TIKI DO
HN


DOHN DOKO DOHN

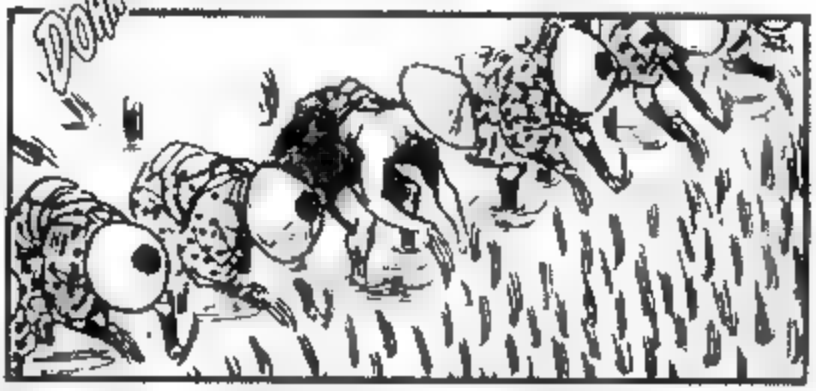

DOHN DOHN
DOHN DOHN

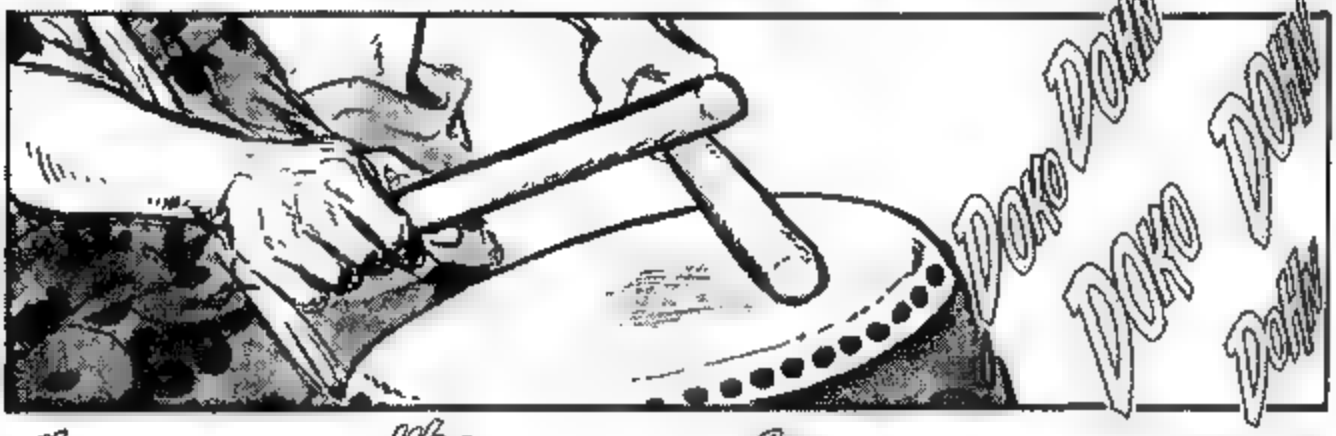
IT THINK'S UP IN THAMMA-GA A GOD HARA
DOHN DOHN

OF THE RICE PADDY GODS!
HE MUST BE THE FATHER

AHH AHH THE FATHER OF THEM AHH

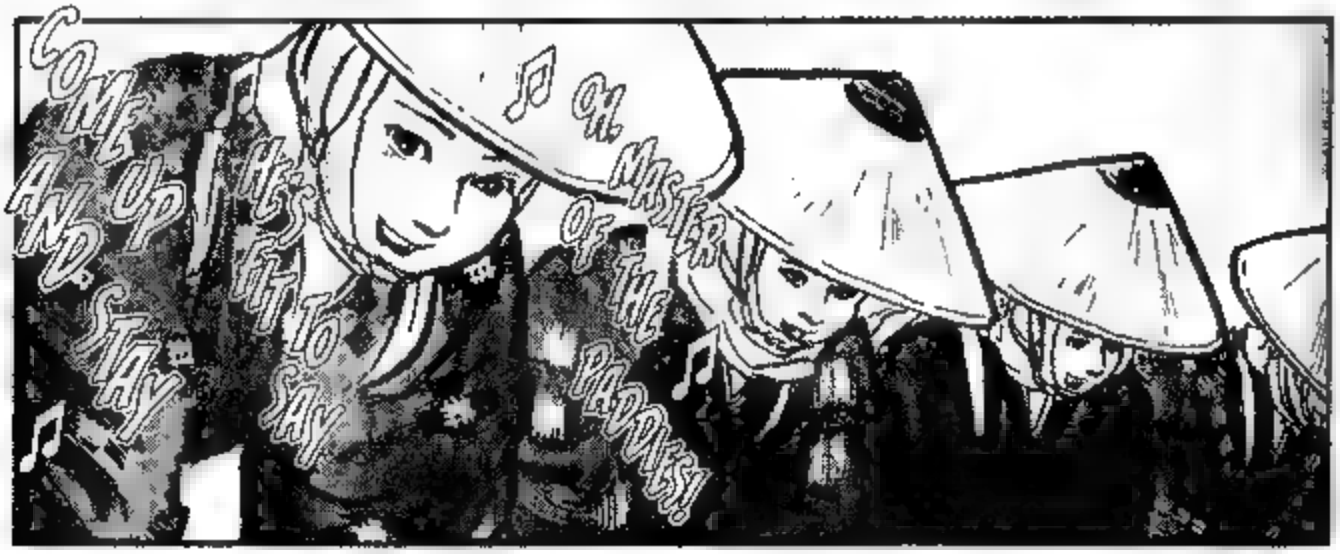
DOHN DOHN

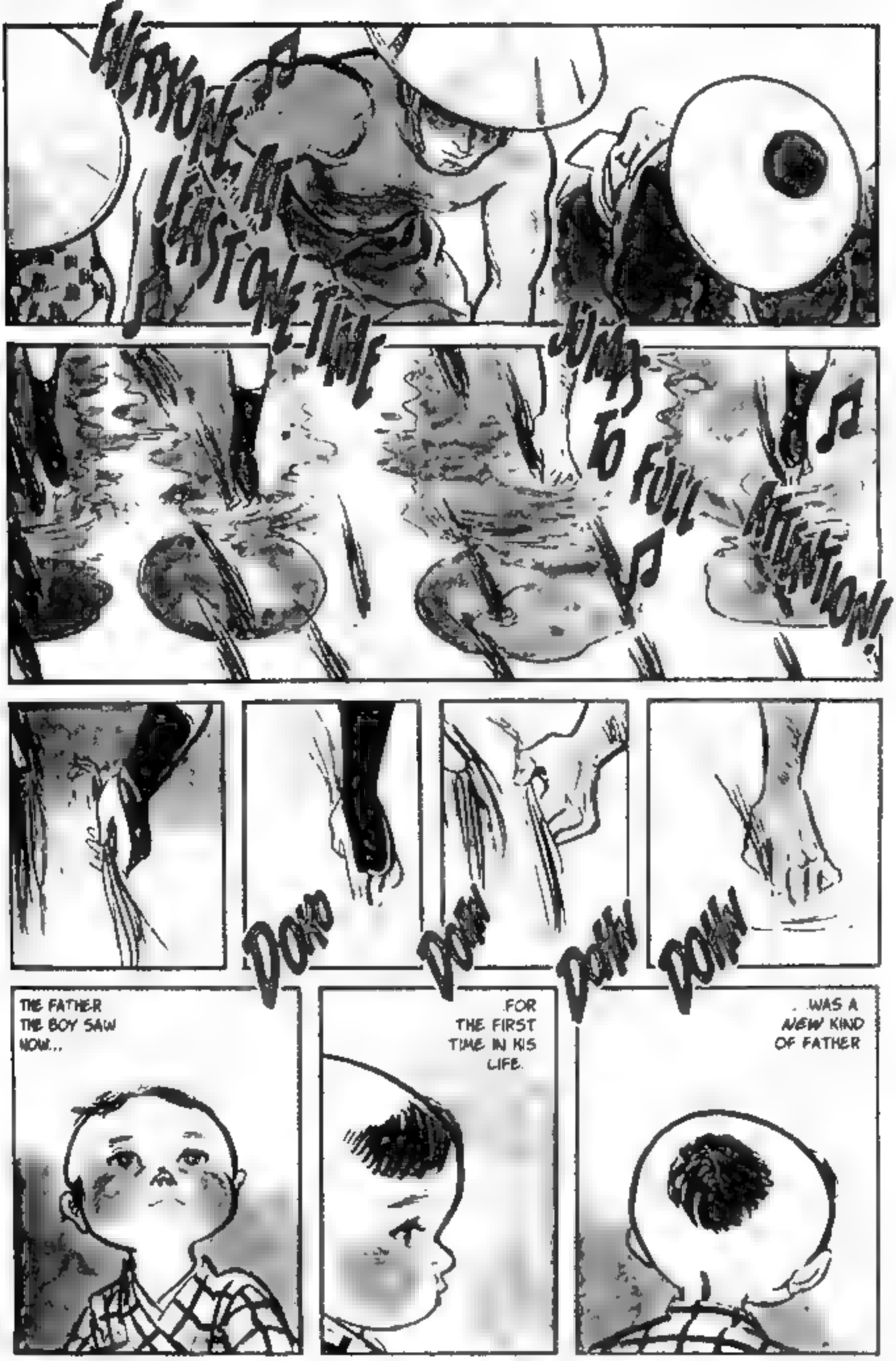

DOHN

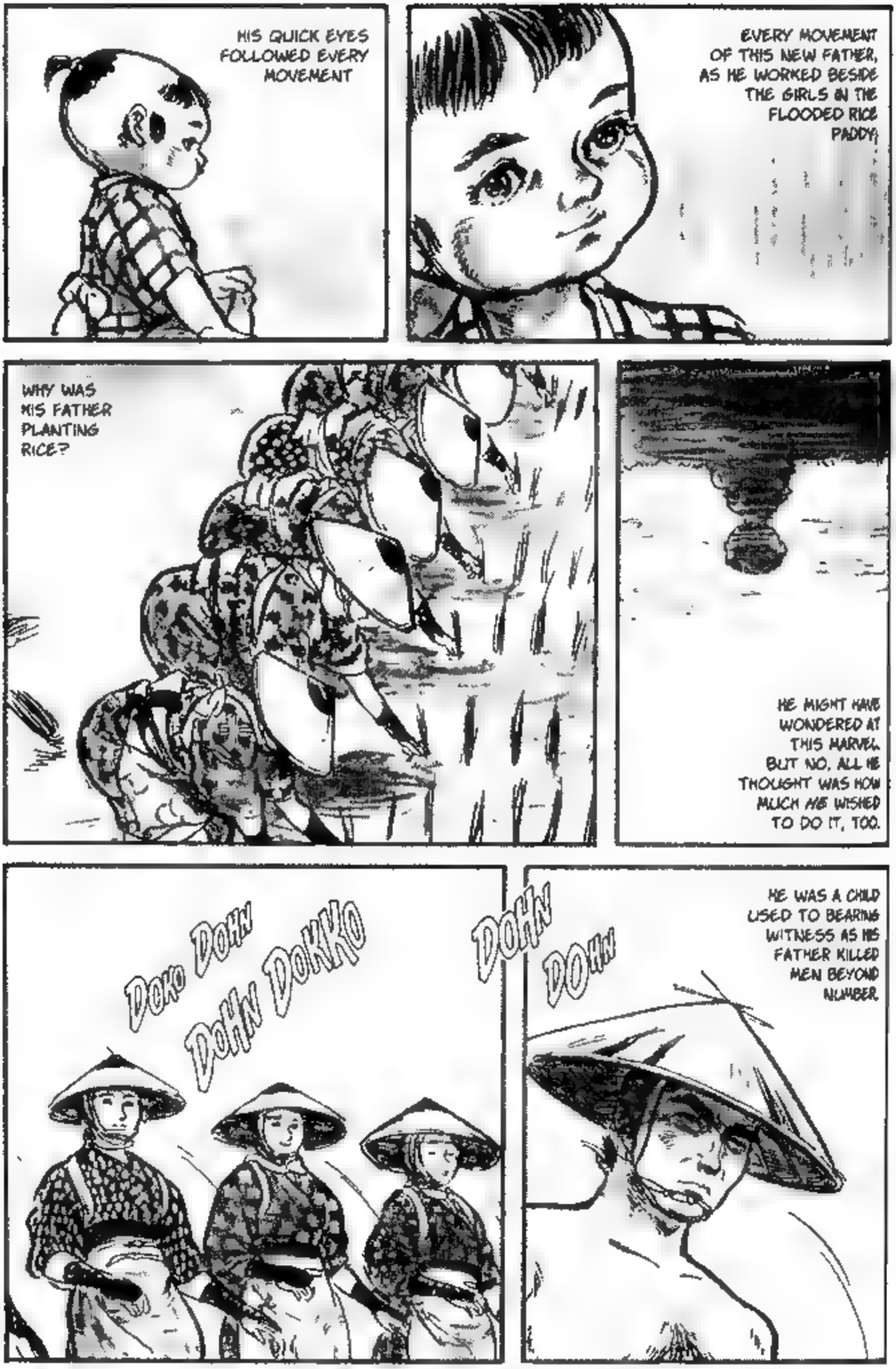

DOKO DOHN
DOKO DOHN
DOHN

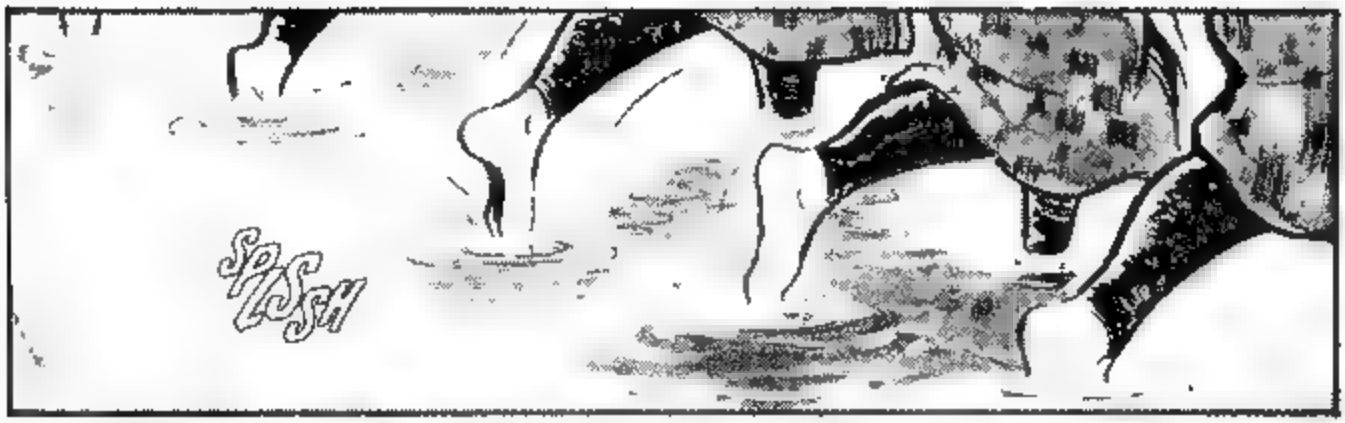
HE TUCKS UP HIS KIMONO
WITH A BRIGHT RED CORD

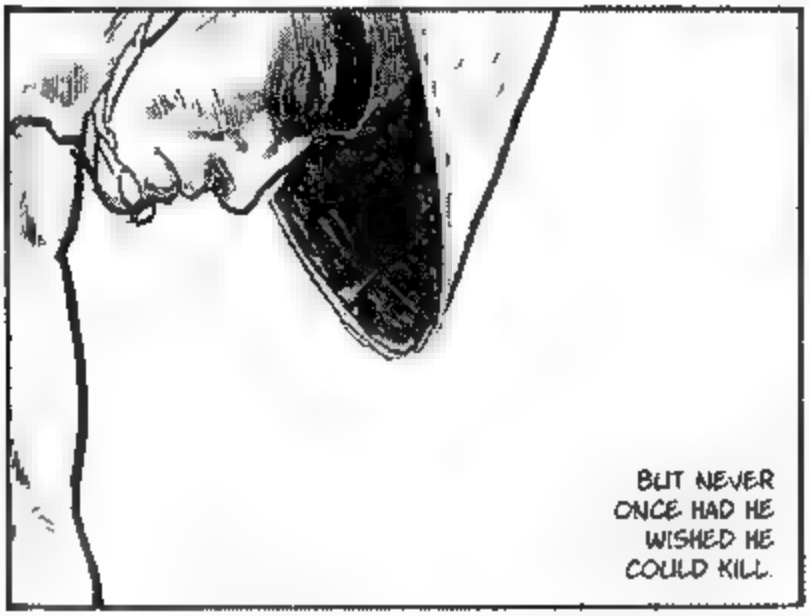
BUT THEN HE SITS ON HIS THRONE
AND LOOKS MIGHTY BORED

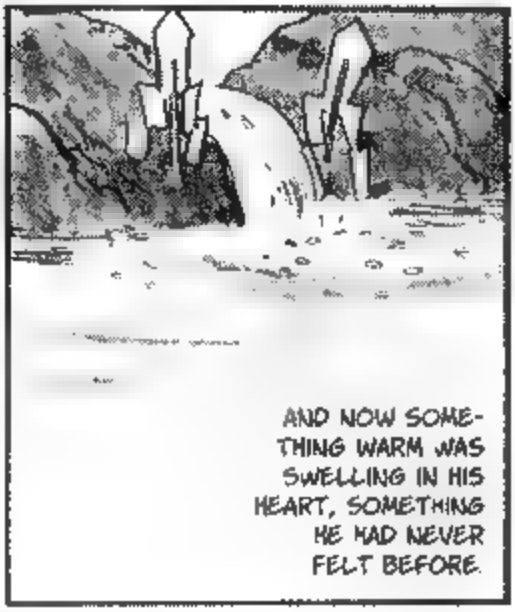

COME UP AND STAY
HE'S FIT TO SAY
OH MASTER OF THE PADDLES!

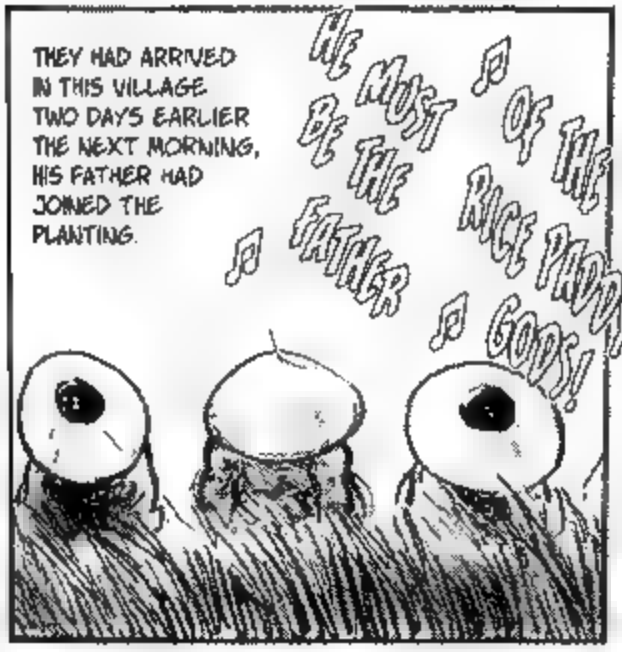

EVERYONE AT LEAST ONE TIME
JUMPS TO FULL ATTENTION!
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
THE FATHER THE BOY SAW NOW...
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE.
...WAS A NEW KIND OF FATHER


HIS QUICK EYES FOLLOWED EVERY MOVEMENT
EVERY MOVEMENT OF THIS NEW FATHER, AS HE WORKED BESIDE THE GIRLS IN THE FLOODED RICE PADDY.
WHY WAS HIS FATHER PLANTING RICE?
HE MIGHT HAVE WONDERED AT THIS MARVEL. BUT NO, ALL HE THOUGHT WAS HOW MUCH HE WISHED TO DO IT, TOO.
DOKO DOHN DOHN DOKKO
DOHN DOHN
HE WAS A CHILD USED TO BEARING WITNESS AS HIS FATHER KILLED MEN BEYOND NUMBER.

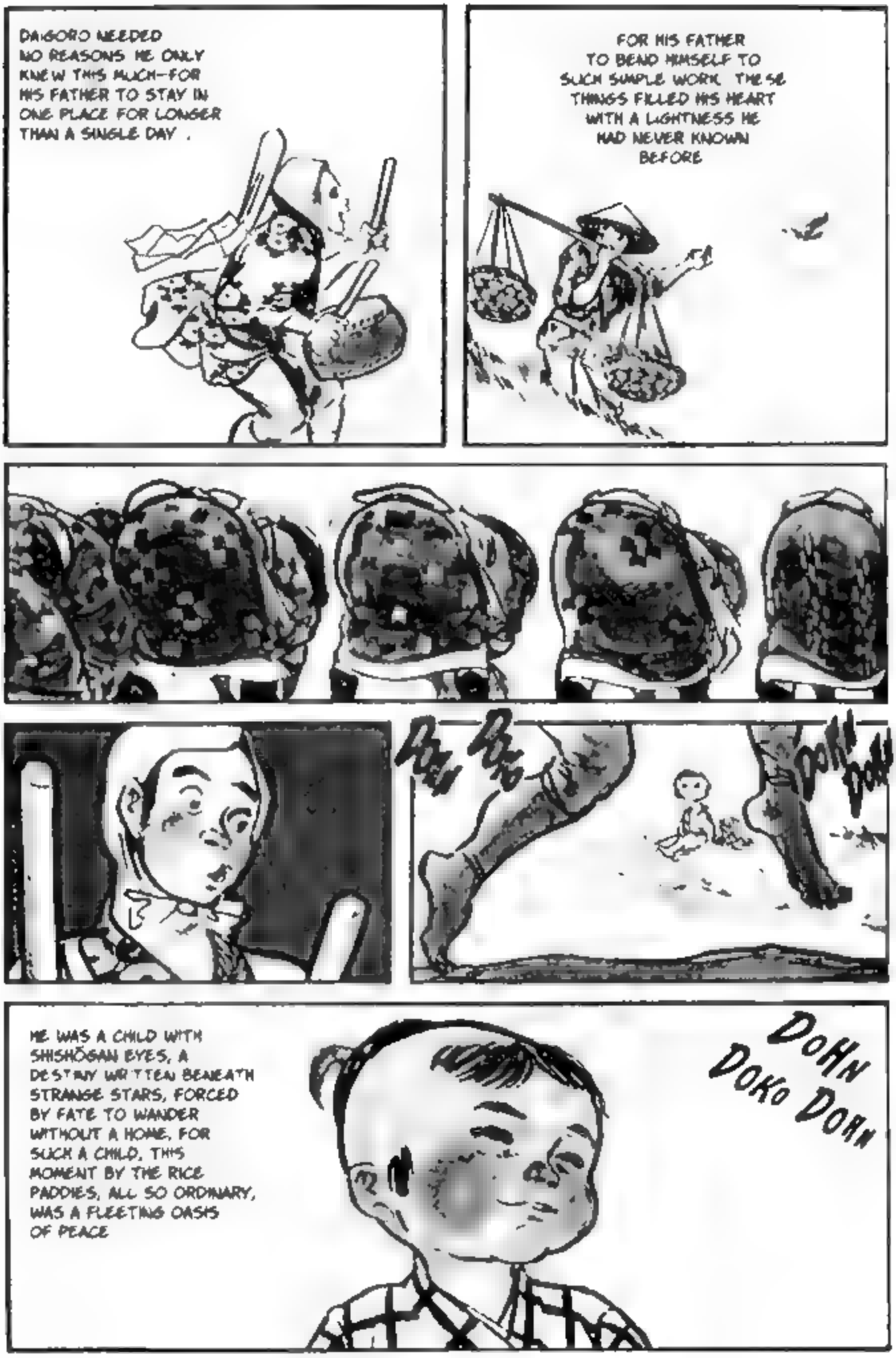

SPLASH


BUT NEVER ONCE HAD HE WISHED HE COULD KILL.

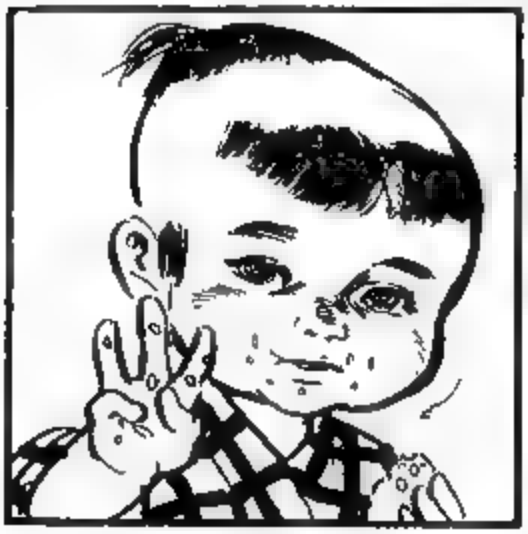

AND NOW SOMETHING WARM WAS SWELLING IN HIS HEART, SOMETHING HE HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE.


THEY HAD ARRIVED IN THIS VILLAGE TWO DAYS EARLIER. THE NEXT MORNING, HIS FATHER HAD JOINED THE PLANTING.
HE MUST BE THE FATHER OF THE RICE PADDY GODS!

AAH! FATHER OF THEM ALL!
FATHER OF THEM ALL!


DAIGORO NEEDED NO REASONS HE ONLY KNEW THIS MUCH—FOR HIS FATHER TO STAY IN ONE PLACE FOR LONGER THAN A SINGLE DAY .
FOR HIS FATHER TO BEND HIMSELF TO SUCH SIMPLE WORK. THESE THINGS FILLED HIS HEART WITH A LIGHTNESS HE HAD NEVER KNOWN BEFORE
DOHN DOKO DOHN
HE WAS A CHILD WITH SHISHŌSAN EYES, A DESTINY WRITTEN BENEATH STRANGE STARS, FORCED BY FATE TO WANDER WITHOUT A HOME. FOR SUCH A CHILD, THIS MOMENT BY THE RICE PADDIES, ALL SO ORDINARY, WAS A FLEETING OASIS OF PEACE
DOHN DOKO DOHN

SUCH A LITTLE CUTIE!
ISN'T HE JUST!
HOW OLD ARE YOU, SWEETIE?



THREE, ARE YOU? MY, SUCH A BIG BOY!
WANT ANOTHER? THEY'RE YUMMY!

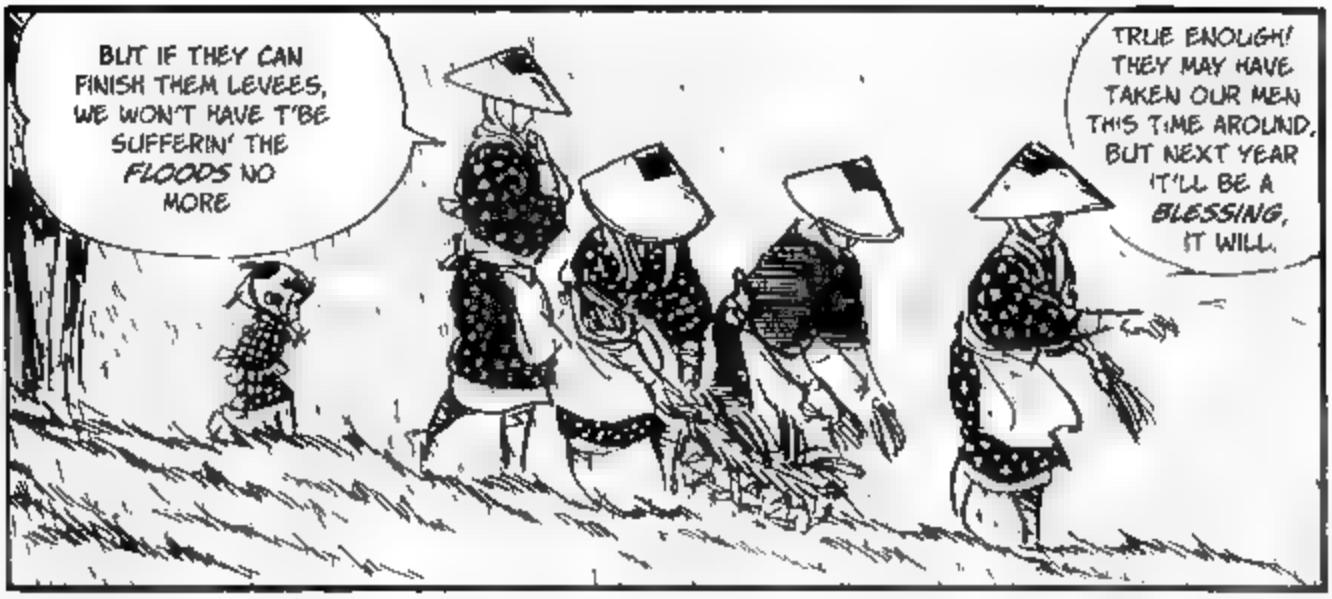
MY THANKS..
WHY ARE YOU HELPING US WITH THE PLANTING, O-SAMURAI-SAMA?
WHEN THE VILLAGE HEADMAN TOLD US, WE WAS AMAZED WE WERE.
IT'S RARER THAN THE BLACK WIND BLOWIN', IT IS.
"THE BLACK WIND"..?

THAT'S A SOUTH WIND BLOWIN' UP DURING RAINY SEASON, SIR
A WIND OUT OF SEASON, SEE...? THEY SAY WHEN THE BLACK WIND BLOWS, YOU NEVER SEEN SO MUCH RICE!
'COURSE, IT DON'T REALLY BLOW, NOT REALLY

A BLACK WIND ..

WELL, SHALL WE GIVE IT ANOTHER GO?

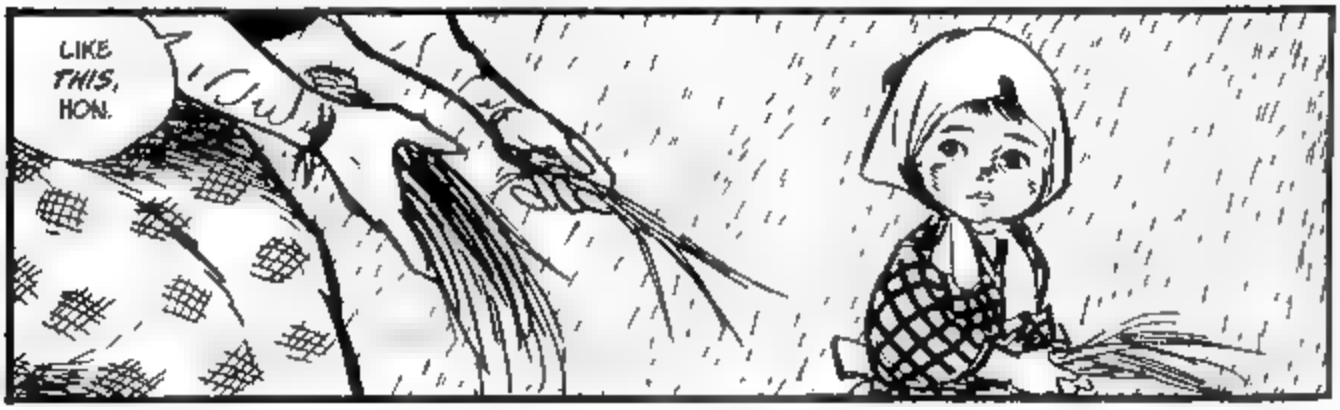
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH MEN THIS YEAR, AND THAT'S A FACT WE GOTTA DO EVERY BIT OF IT ON OUR OWN.


BUT IF THEY CAN FINISH THEM LEVEES, WE WON'T HAVE T'BE SUFFERIN' THE *FLOODS* NO MORE
TRUE ENOUGH! THEY MAY HAVE TAKEN OUR MEN THIS TIME AROUND, BUT NEXT YEAR IT'LL BE A *BLESSING*, IT WILL.

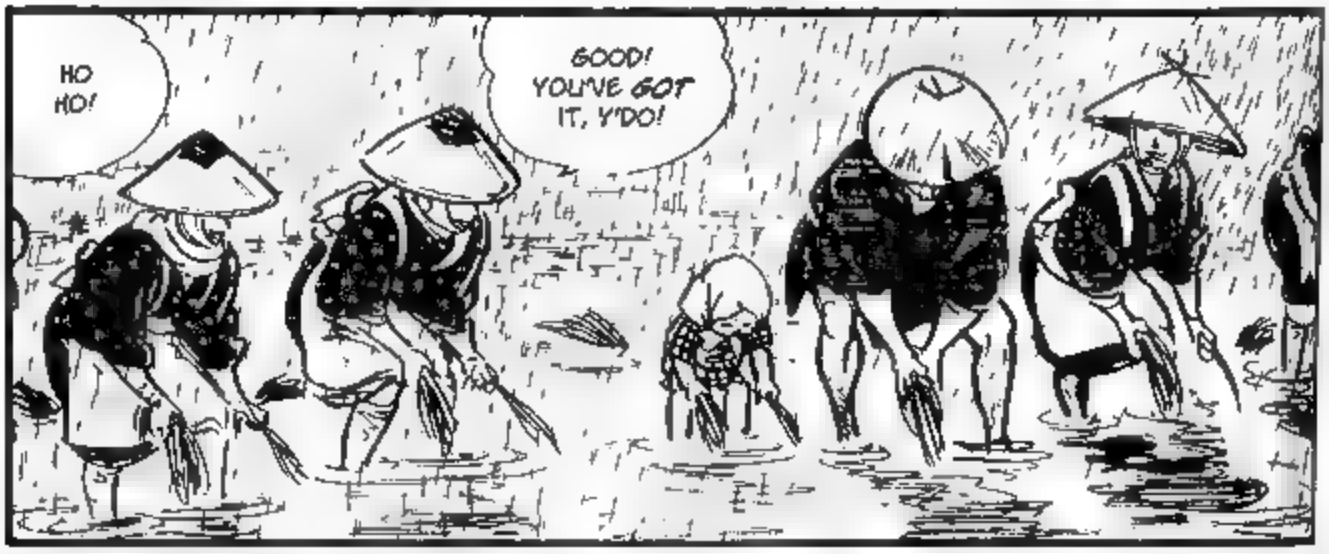
WHY, *LORDY!* WILL YOU BE HELPING US *TOO*, YOUNG S R?
SPISH
SPISH

HERE, SWEETIE THIS'LL KEEP YOU DRY

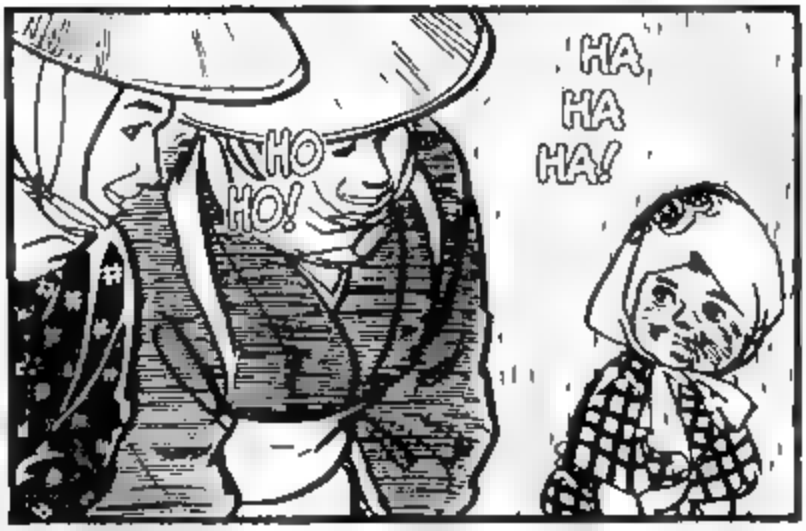
HA HA HA!
HO HO!
HEE, HEE!

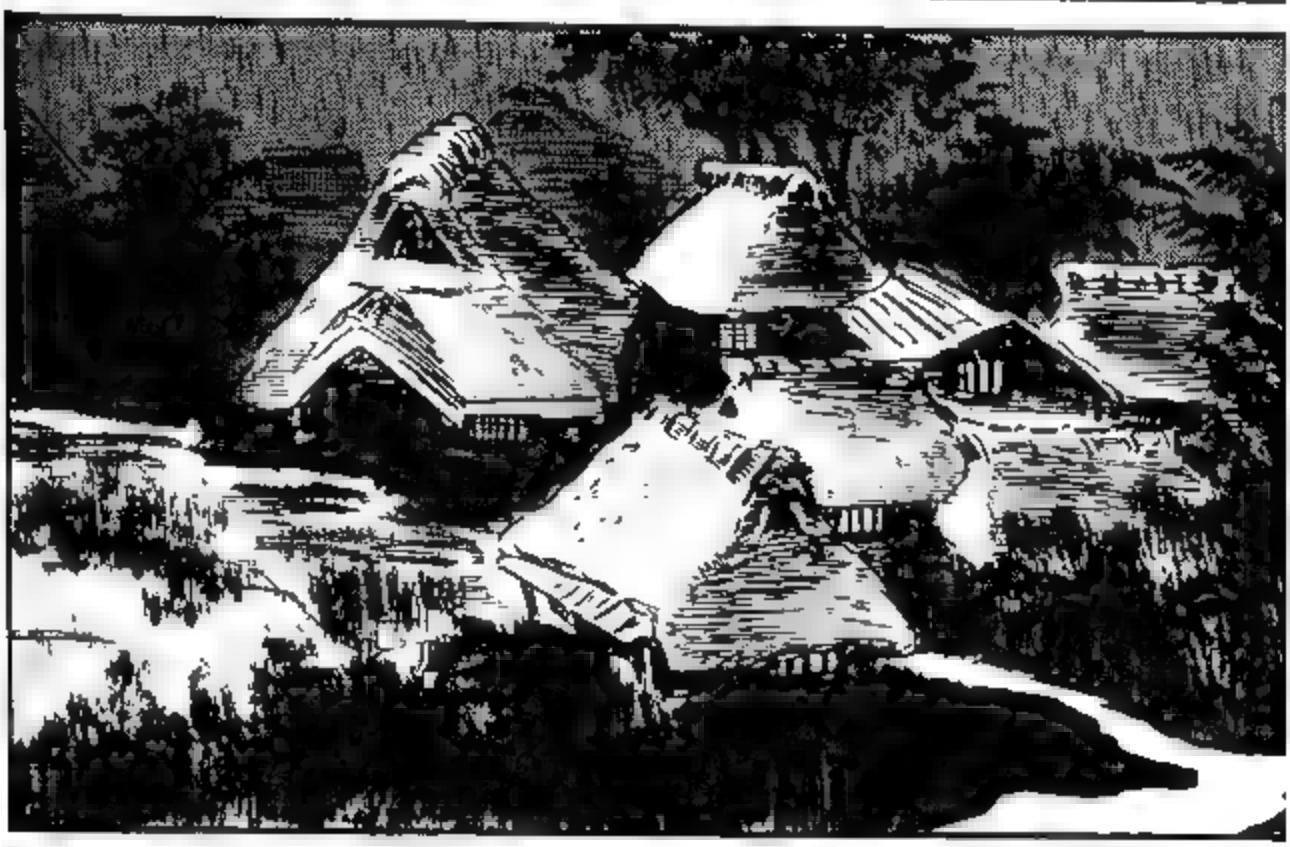

LIKE THIS, HON.

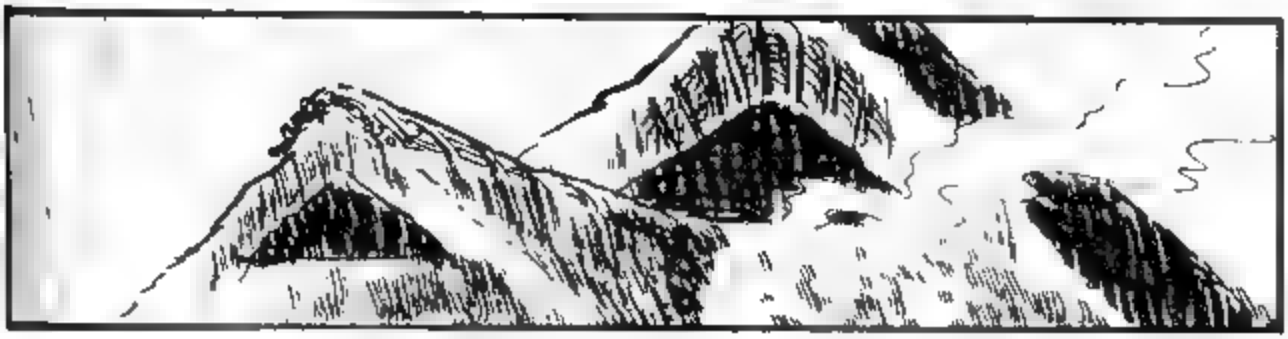
SPLRK!

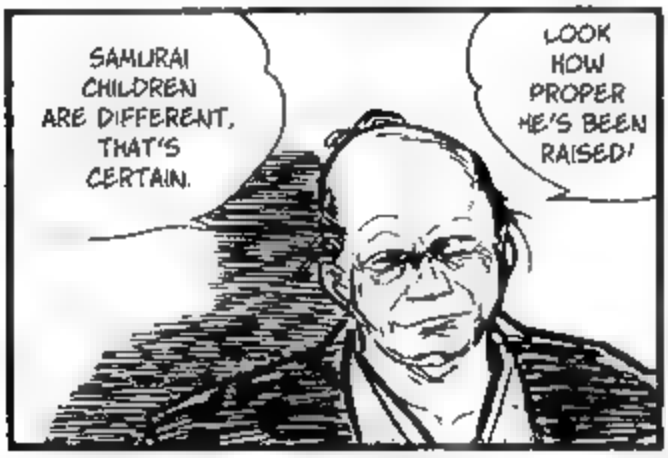

HO HO!
GOOD! YOU'VE GOT IT, Y'DO!

SPLRK


HO HO!
HA HA HA!






SAMURAI CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT, THAT'S CERTAIN.
LOOK HOW PROPER HE'S BEEN RAISED!

....
....

IT'S OUR LOCAL SAKE, SIR. I DON'T KNOW IF YE'LL LIKE IT, BUT .
. TRY A SIP!
MY THANKS, BUT I DO NOT DRINK.

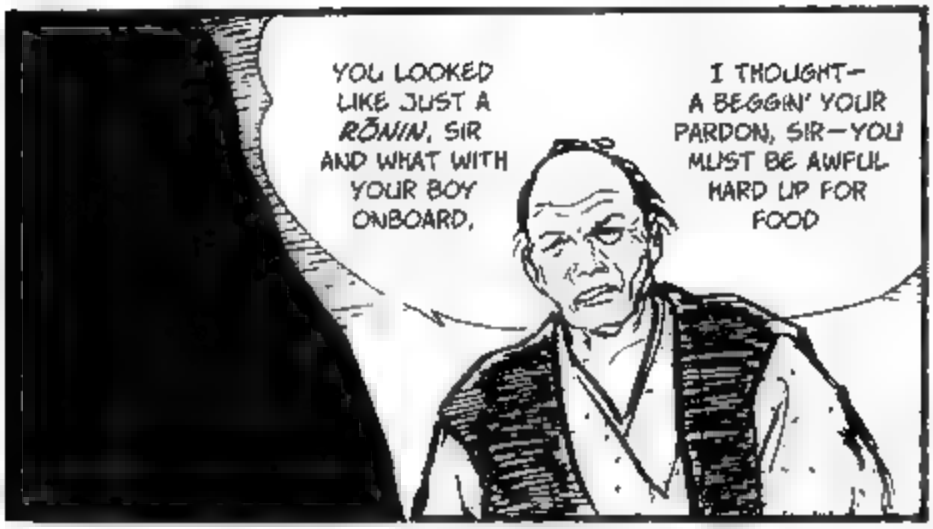
DO YE NOT, NOW? HMM.

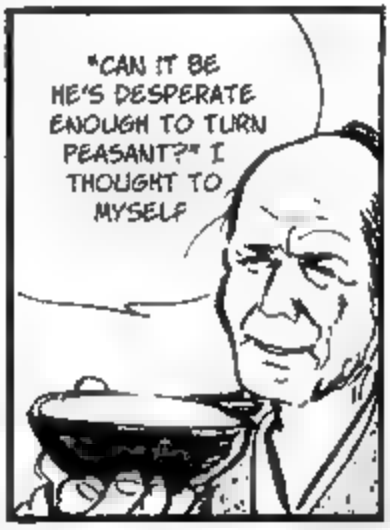
BY THE WAY, SIR. HOW'S YER BONES? GOT SOME ACHES, I WAGER.
YES. . SOME.

I'D IMAGINE SO! EVEN A GENTLEMAN TRAINED IN THE ARTS OF WAR
...MIGHT DISCOVER A FEW NEW MUSCLES, WORKING THE FIELDS AND PADDIES.
INDEED

NOW...I WAS WONDERING, SIR WHY IS IT YOU'RE HELPING US PEASANTS WITH OUR WORK? WOULD YE BE WILLING TO TELL US WHY?
. . . .
. . . .

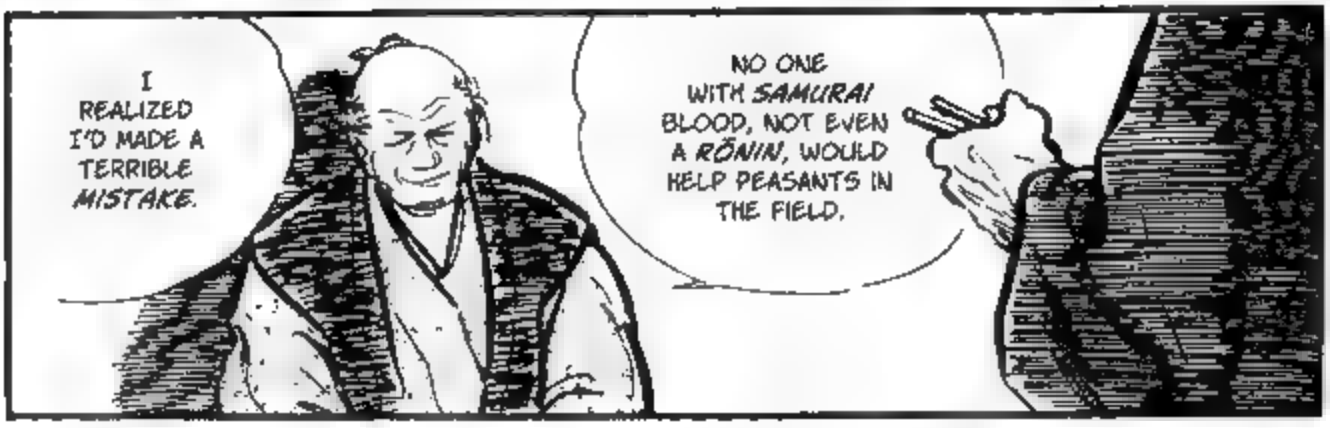
WHEN YOU SHOWED UP T'OTHER NIGHT AND ASKED IF YOU COULD WORK WITH US, WELL... TO BE HONEST, I FIGURED YOU WOULDN'T LAST HALF A DAY

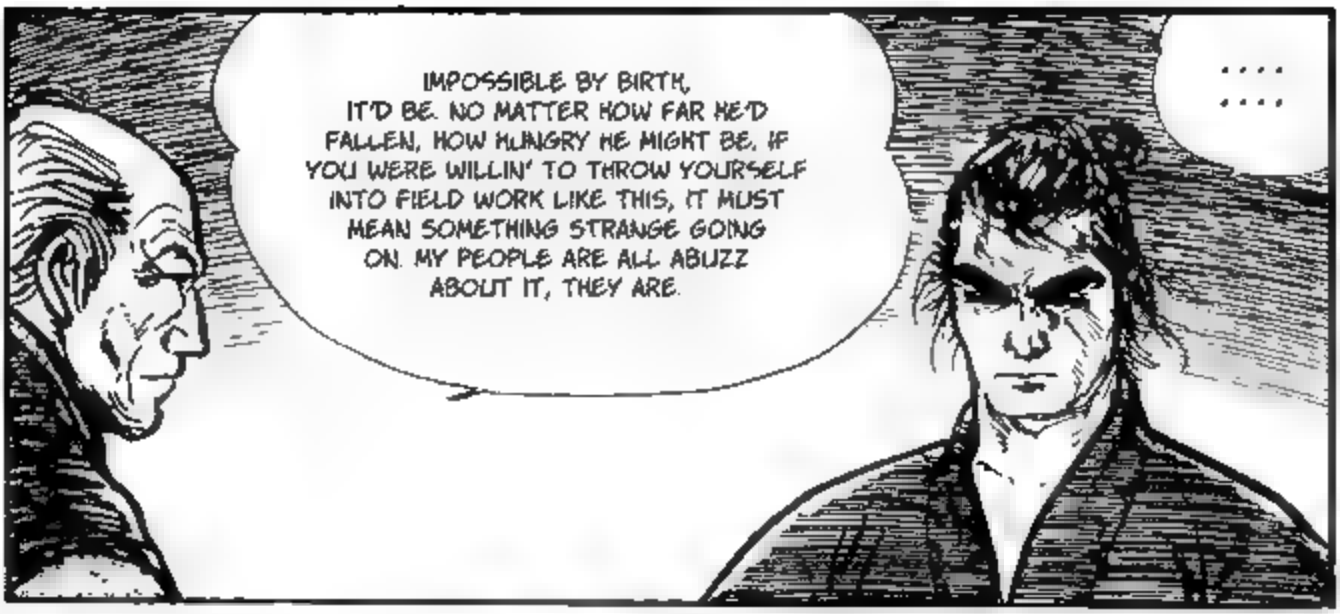

YOU LOOKED LIKE JUST A *RŌNIN*, SIR AND WHAT WITH YOUR BOY ONBOARD,
I THOUGHT— A BEGGIN' YOUR PARDON, SIR—YOU MUST BE AWFUL HARD UP FOR FOOD


"CAN IT BE HE'S DESPERATE ENOUGH TO TURN PEASANT?" I THOUGHT TO MYSELF

AND YET
SLRP

WATCHING YOU WORKING THESE LAST TWO DAYS, SIR..


I REALIZED I'D MADE A TERRIBLE *MISTAKE*.
NO ONE WITH *SAMURAI* BLOOD, NOT EVEN A *RŌNIN*, WOULD HELP PEASANTS IN THE FIELD.

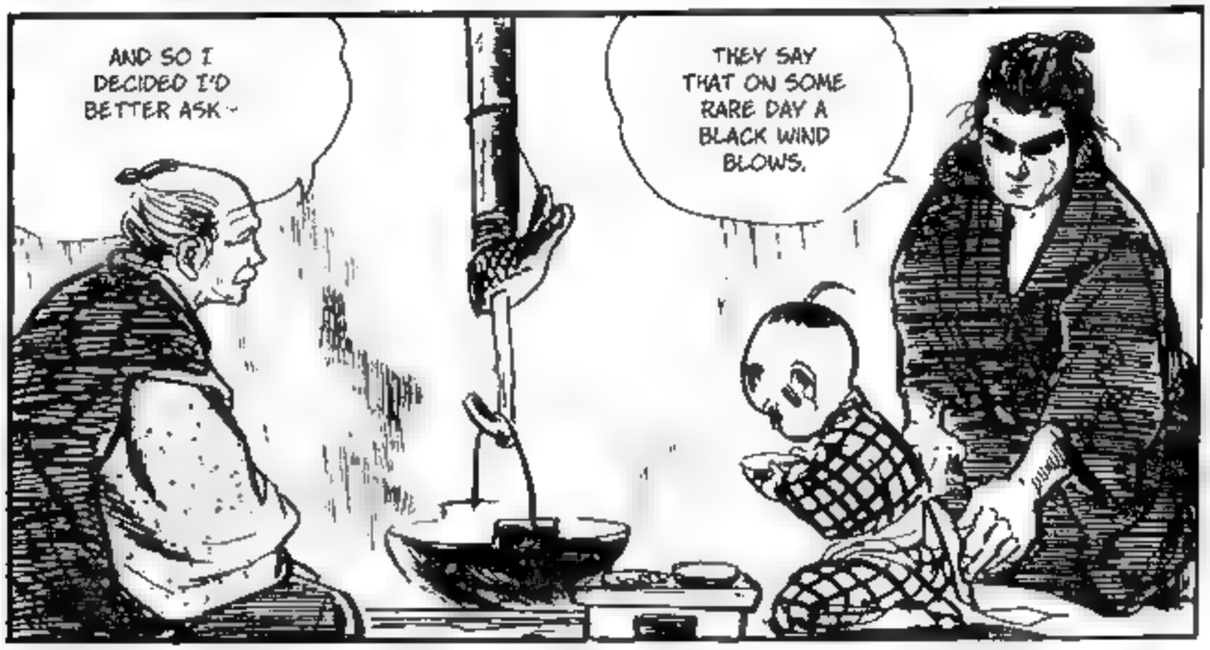

IMPOSSIBLE BY BIRTH, IT'D BE. NO MATTER HOW FAR HE'D FALLEN, HOW HUNGRY HE MIGHT BE. IF YOU WERE WILLIN' TO THROW YOURSELF INTO FIELD WORK LIKE THIS, IT MUST MEAN SOMETHING STRANGE GOING ON. MY PEOPLE ARE ALL ABUZZ ABOUT IT, THEY ARE.
....
....

YOU SO UPRIGHT AND PROPER...YET EVEN WHEN YOU WENT INTO THE MUD FOR THE FIRST TIME, IT DIDN'T GIVE YOU NO PAUSE AT ALL. NO SIGN OF DISCOMFORT, LIKE.
YOU WORK SO EFFORTLESS AND NATURAL LIKE FLOWING WATER. I'VE BEEN ASTONISHED, SIR, AND THAT'S THE TRUTH.

AND IT'S NOT JUST ME. MY DAUGHTERS, MY WIFE, OLD GRANNY HERE, WE'RE ALL THE SAME.

THE OTHER VILLAGERS, TOO, I WAGER.

. . . .
. . . .


AND SO I DECIDED I'D BETTER ASK --
THEY SAY THAT ON SOME RARE DAY A BLACK WIND BLOWS.

MAY I ASK YOU TO SEE US THAT WAY?

A SMALL MYSTERY?

A WANDERING RŌNIN, HELPING PLANT RICE FOR PEOPLE HE DOESN'T KNOW.
IS NOT THIS, IN IT'S OWN WAY, A BLACK WIND ?

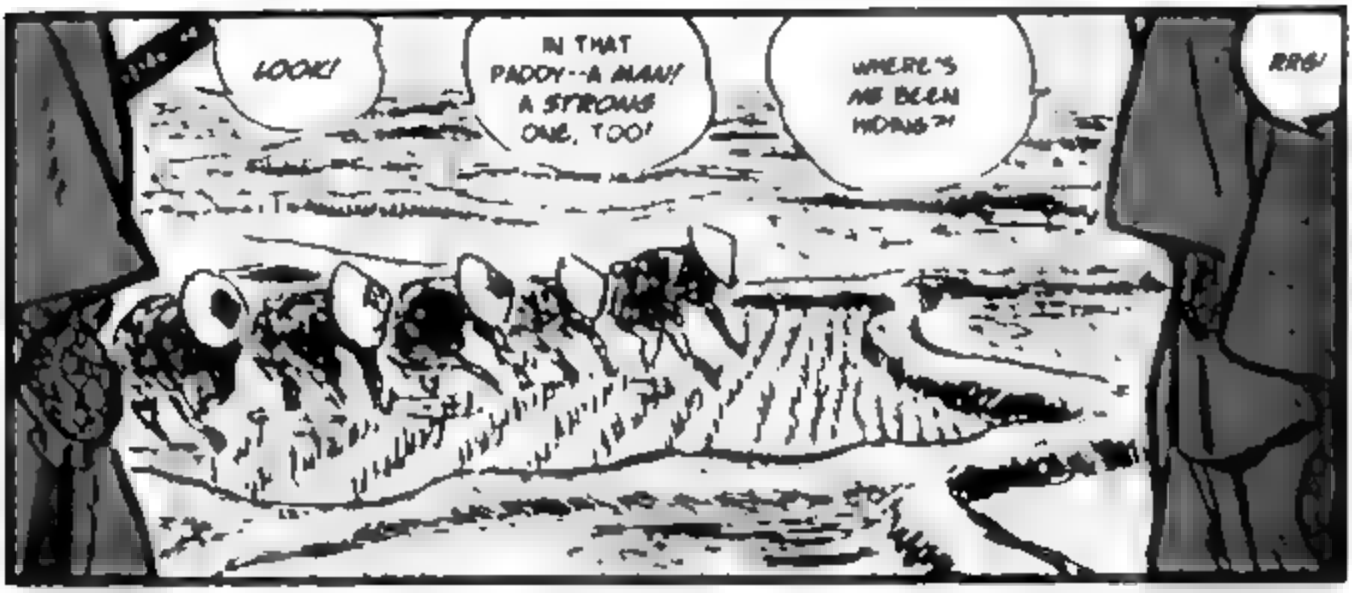
WE JUST CAN'T FIND ANY MORE MEN! AT THIS RATE, WE'LL NEVER FINISH THE LEVEES!
IF THERE'S MORE FLOODING THIS YEAR, OUR TAX REVENUES WILL PLUNGE. THE DAIKAN COULD LOSE HIS POST.

BUT THERE AREN'T ANY MEN LEFT! WE'VE STRIPPED THE VILLAGES SO BARE THE WOMEN AND OLD FOLK ARE DOING THE PLANTING.
IT'S TRUE., WE COMB THE COUNTRYSIDE ALL DAY WITHOUT FINDING ANY MORE LABORERS. YET IF THE PROJECT FAILS, THE CYCLE WILL NEVER END.

IT WAS HOPELESS FROM THE START! YOU CAN'T CONTROL THE KANAMASHI RIVER. THE FLOOD PLAIN'S TOO BIG.

SIXTEEN LEVEES TO CHANNEL THE RIVER. IT SOUNDED GOOD ON PAPER, BUT THEY STARTED THE PROJECT BEFORE THEY'D EVEN WORKED OUT THE LOGISTICS!

NOW WE'D TAKE ANY MAN THAT CAN WALK STRAIGHT AND—
HMM?!


LOOK!
IN THAT PADDY--A MAN! A STRONG ONE, TOO!
WHERE'S HE BEEN HIDING?!
RRG!

YOU THERE! COME HERE!

HEY! CAN'T YOU HEAR ME, PEASANT?!
WE MEAN YOU!!

PACK YOUR BELONG-INGS!
WE'RE IMPRESSING YOU FOR CONSTRUC-TION WORK!

I REFUSE!

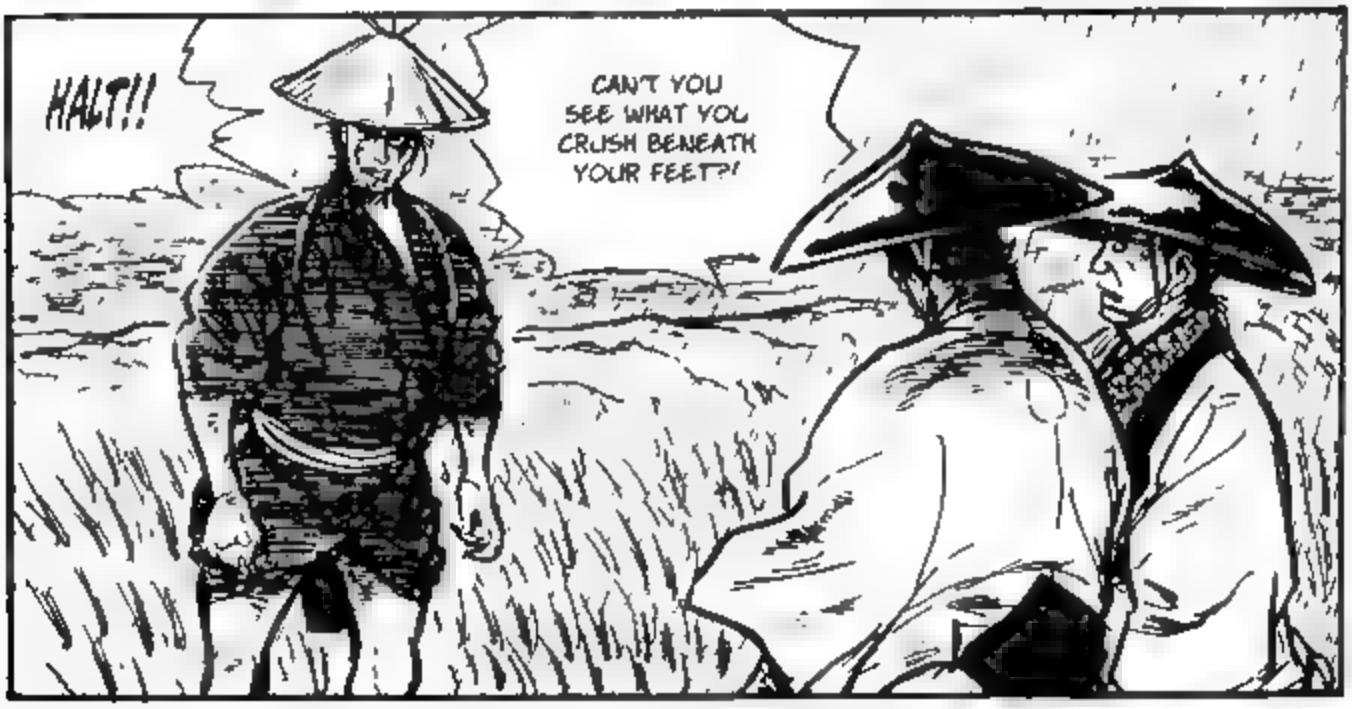
WHAT?!

WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!
REMOVE THAT *HAT*!! GET UP HERE!

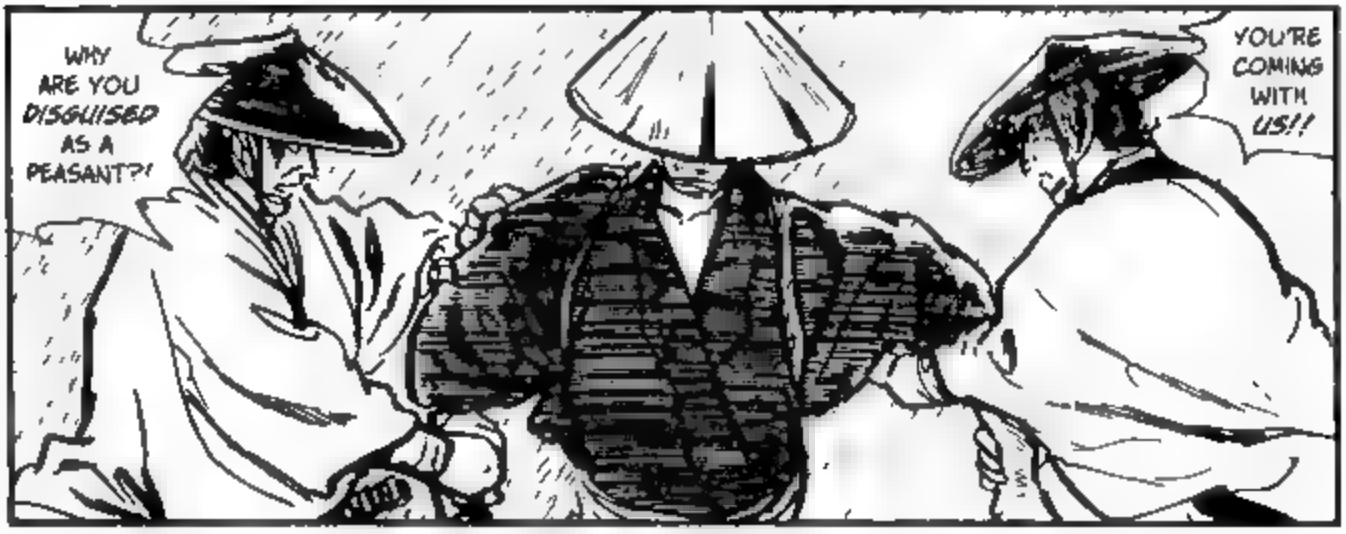
I SAID *I REFUSE!*

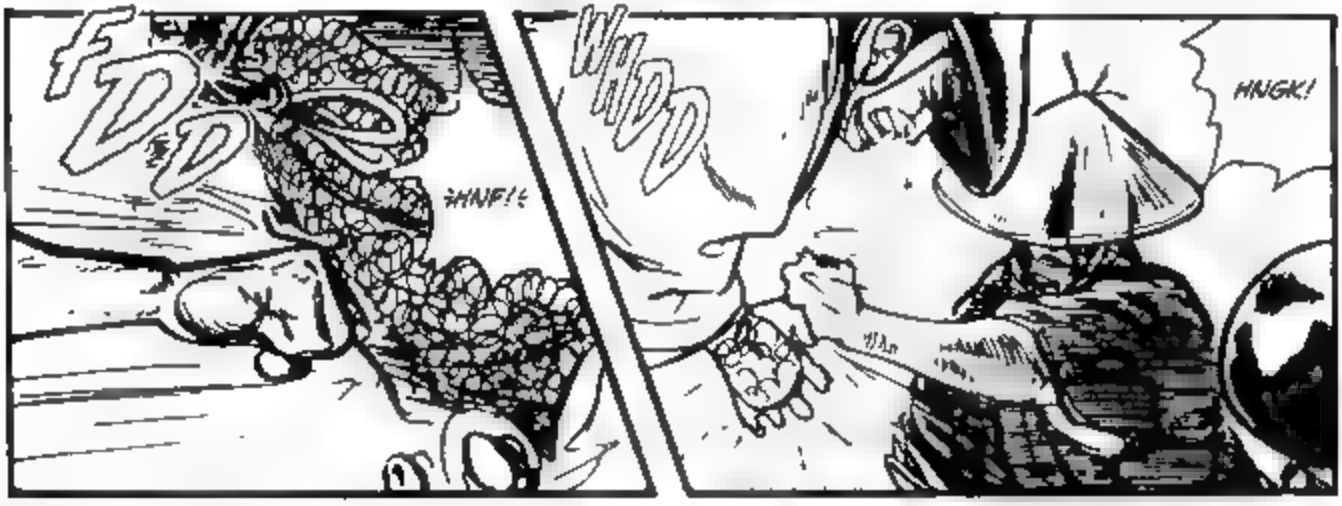
Y-YOU *CUR!*
DON'T YOU *KNOW* WE'RE FROM THE KANAMASHI *DAIKANSHO*?!
WHAT INSOLENCE!
UNFORGIV-ABLE!!

SSSSH
SSSSH

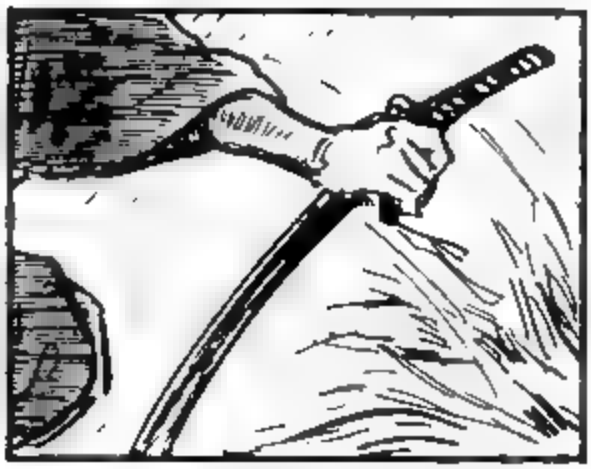

HALT!!
CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU CRUSH BENEATH YOUR FEET?!

MORE AND MORE SUSPICIOUS!
WHO ARE YOU?!


WHY ARE YOU DISGUISED AS A PEASANT?!
YOU'RE COMING WITH US!!


FDD
SHNF!!
WHDD
HNGK!

BLOOSH
SPLOSSH



EEEEK!!
SPISSH
SPISSH
SPISSH

THE WARMTH HAD DRAINED FROM THE BOY'S YOUNG HEART

HIS *SHISHŌGAN* WIDE OPEN, HIS HEART IN AN INSTANT STOOD BESIDE HIS FATHER'S IN *MEIFUMADŌ*.

A CHILD OF DESTINY, RESPONDING ALL TOO EASILY TO THE WAVES OF BLOODLUST TURNED AGAINST THEM.

YOU DRAW YOUR *SWORD?!*

*PROVOC-ATEUR!*

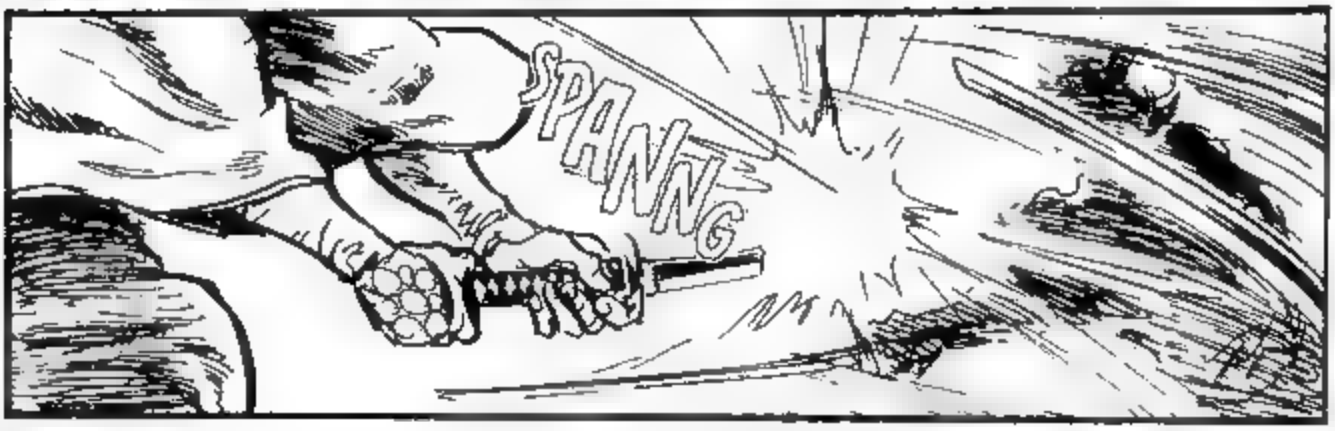
A STARVING DOG *DARES* BARE HIS TEETH AT THE *DAIKANSHO?!*

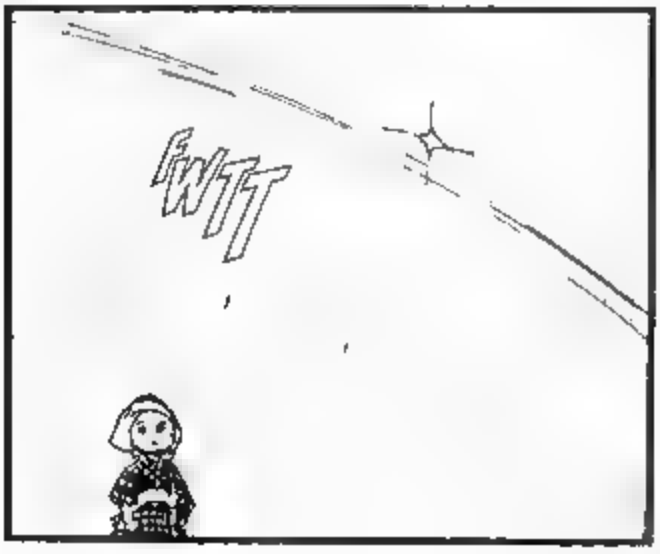
KILL HIM! *CUT HIM DOWN!*

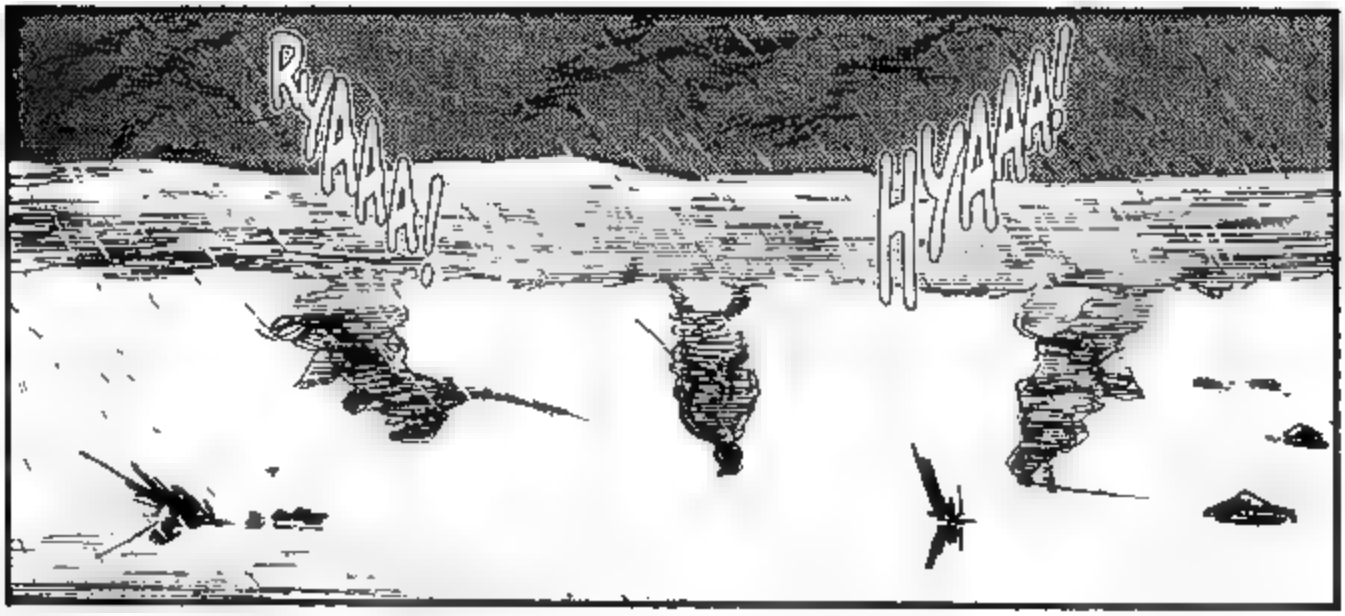
HYAAA!

WHSSHT

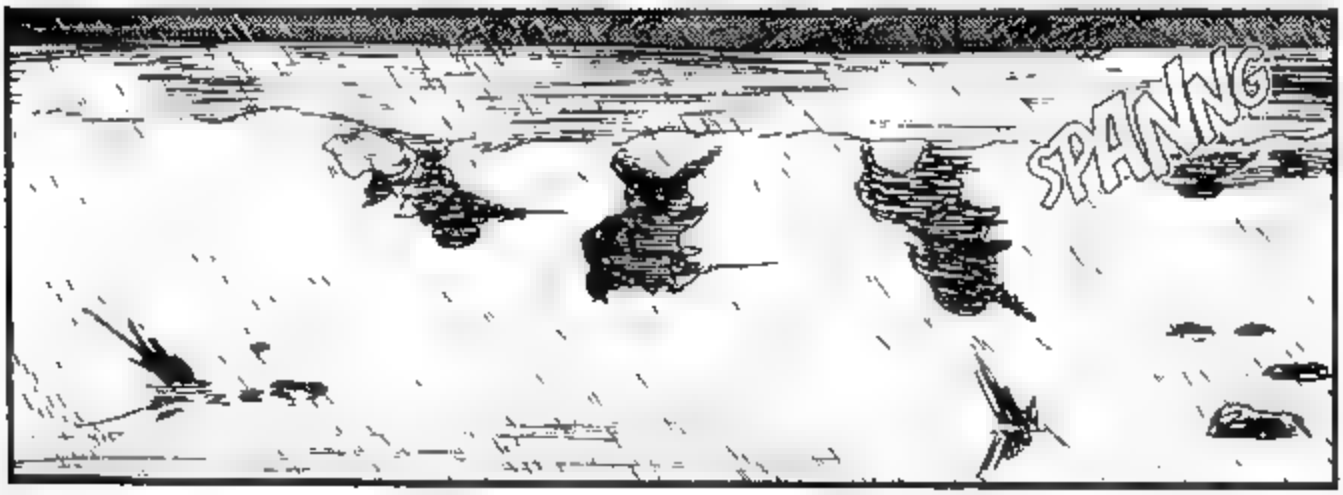
KTANNG


SPANNG


FWTT


RYAAAA!
HYAAAA!

KANNG
FWHIT


SPANNG

SPLIT

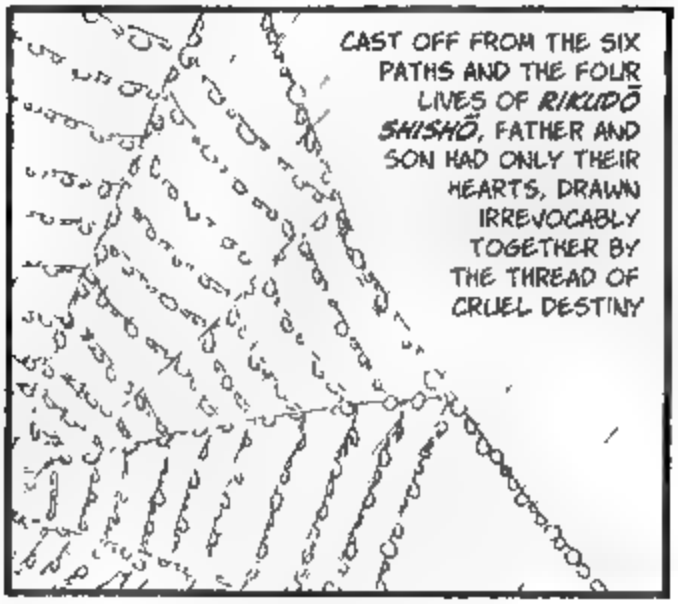
NOW
GO!!

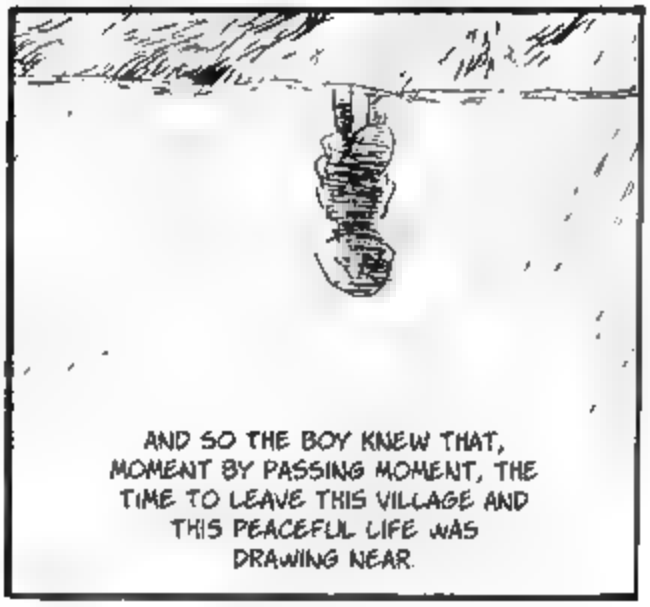
SHKK

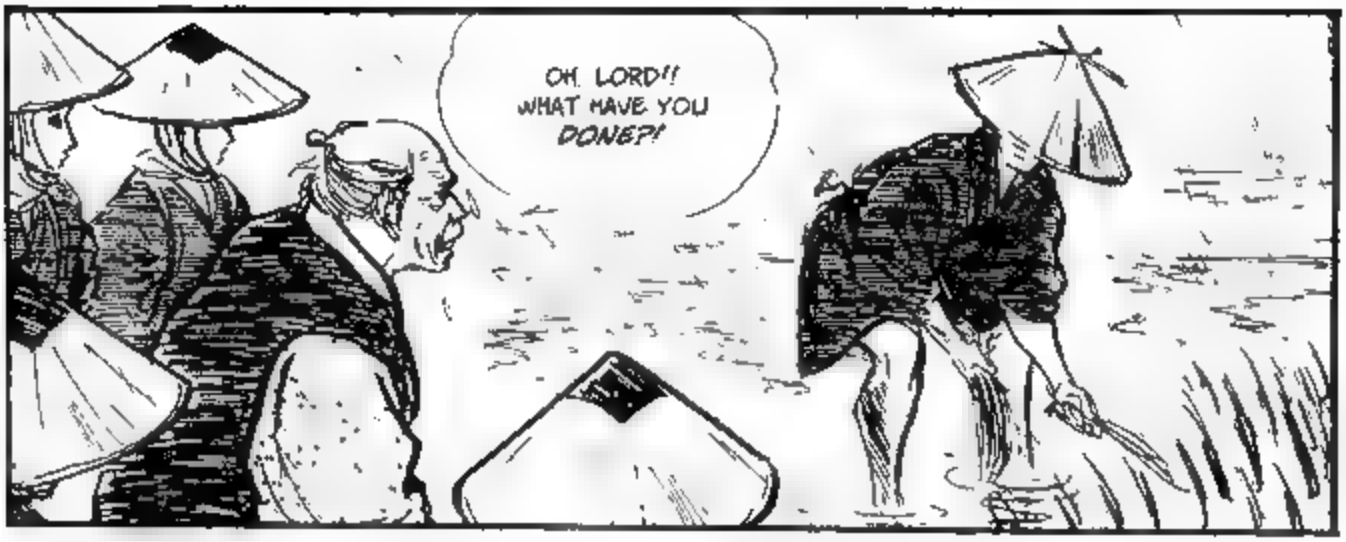
HIS FATHER HAD RETURNED TO THE PLANTING BUT PEACE WOULD NOT RETURN TO THIS BOY'S HEART

NAKED BLADE CROSSED NAKED BLADE. AS ALWAYS, HIS FATHER WON.

BUT THE BOY KNEW WHAT WOULD COME NEXT



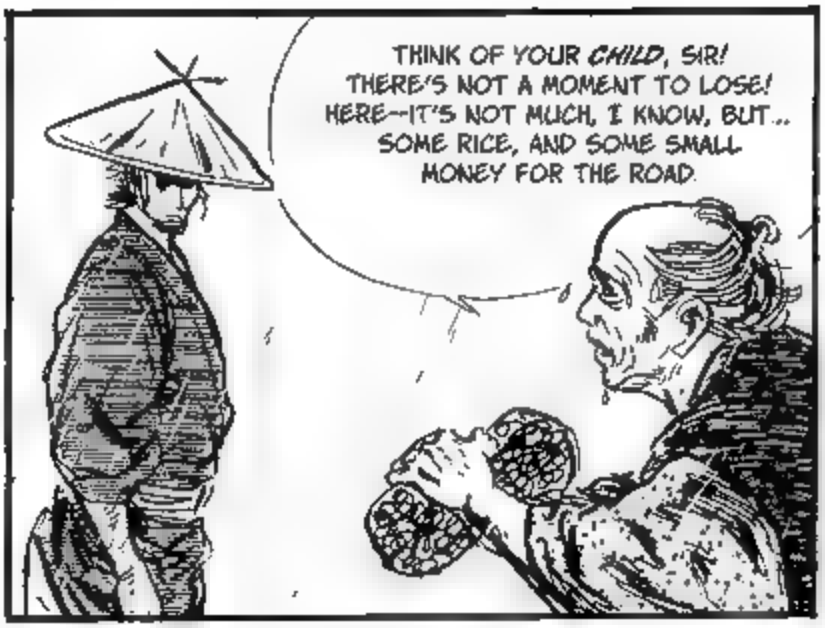




OH, LORD!! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

IT DOES NOT CONCERN YOU.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, IT IS ONLY A BLACK WIND.

FROM WHENCE IT CAME, WHITHER IT BLOWS.
.IT IS FOREVER BEYOND THE KEN OF MEN.

B-BUT ..YOU MUST FLEE! THE DAIKANSHO'S MEN WILL BE COMING FOR YOU!


THINK OF YOUR CHILD, SIR! THERE'S NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE! HERE--IT'S NOT MUCH, I KNOW, BUT... SOME RICE, AND SOME SMALL MONEY FOR THE ROAD.

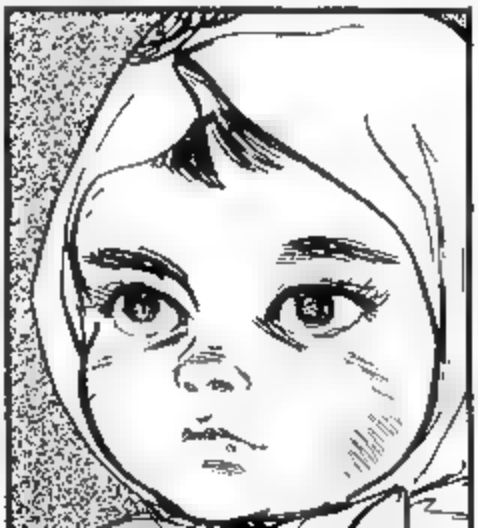
MY THANKS. I WILL ACCEPT THE KINDNESS, IF NOT THE GIFT
YET ,I ASK YOU TO LET ME WORK UNTIL THESE SHOOTS ARE PLANTED.

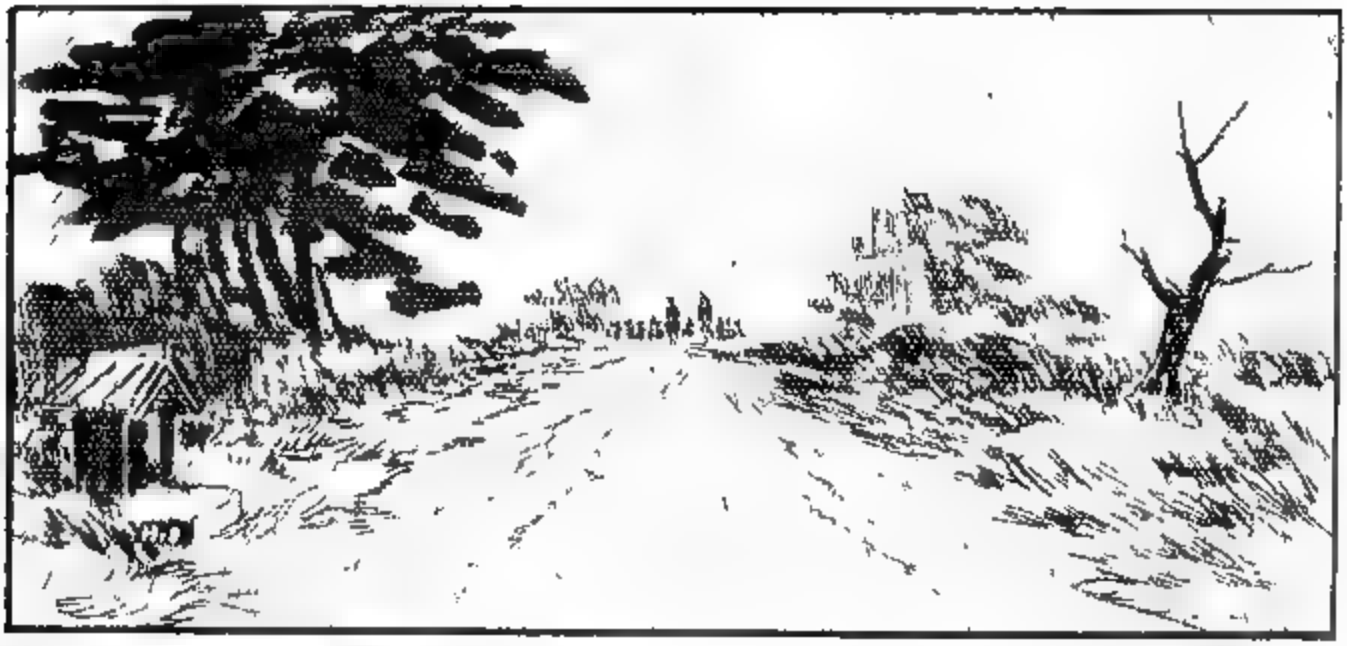
THAT IS WHAT I CAME TO DO!

IT MAY SEEM STRANGE TO YOU, YET FATHER AND SON TOGETHER, WE ENTRUST OUR LIVES TO THIS HANDFUL OF SHOOTS.
YOUR LIVES..?

THE BOY DID NOT MOVE, HIS EYES FIXED STEADILY UPON THE RAIN-SHROUDED ROAD

WATCHING FOR THE ENEMY THAT MUST SURELY EMERGE FROM THE MISTY DISTANCE.
WATCHING, IF SO IT BE, FOR DEATH.

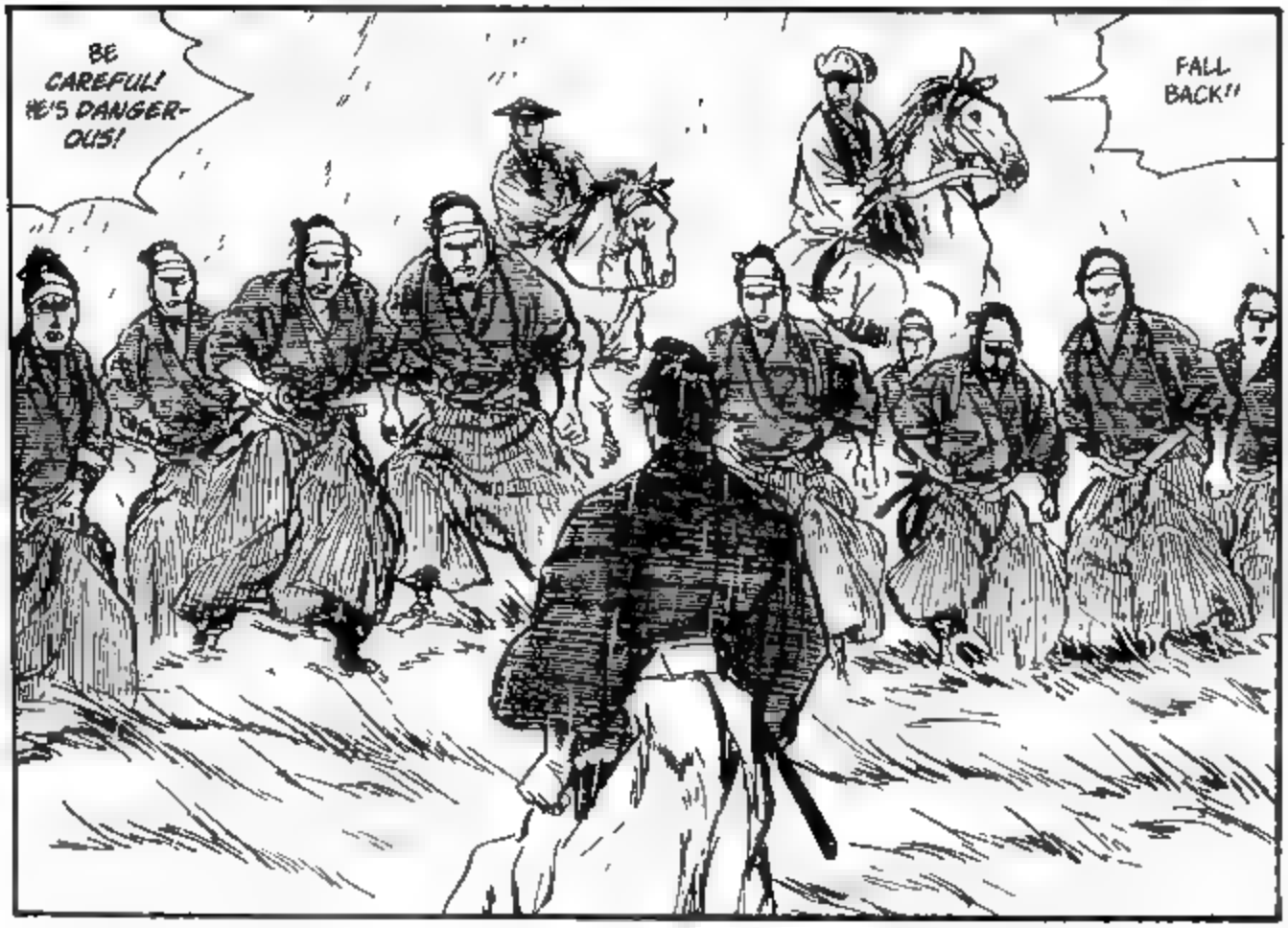




THD THD THD

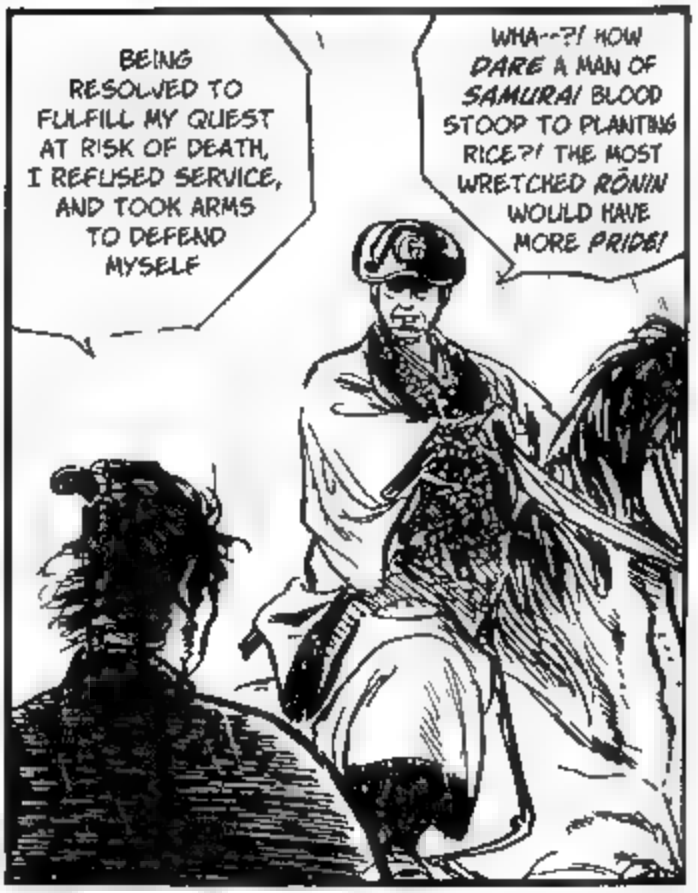
THD
THD

THERE HE IS! THAT'S HIM!
STOP HIM!


BE CAREFUL! HE'S DANGEROUS!
FALL BACK!!

I AM *HARADA WAEMON, DAIKAN* OF THE KANAMASHI DISTRICT!
I AM TOLD YOU REFUSE IMPRESSMENT FOR FLOOD-CONTROL LABOR, AND PRESUME TO TAKE ARMS AGAINST MY MEN! *IS THIS TRUE?!*

I AM NOT FROM THIS DISTRICT I JOIN IN THE PLANTING AS PART OF A SWORN QUEST


BEING RESOLVED TO FULFILL MY QUEST AT RISK OF DEATH, I REFUSED SERVICE, AND TOOK ARMS TO DEFEND MYSELF
WHA--?! HOW *DARE* A MAN OF *SAMURAI* BLOOD STOOP TO PLANTING RICE?! THE MOST WRETCHED *RŌNIN* WOULD HAVE MORE *PRIDE!*

A SWORN QUEST AT RISK OF DEATH ..?! *ABSURD!*
IT IS NOT SOMETHING ANOTHER WOULD UNDERSTAND I ASK ONLY THAT YOU LET ME BE.

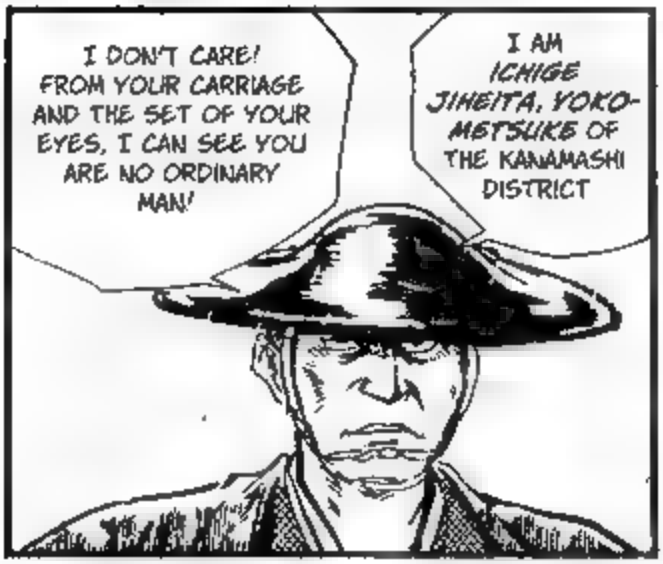
I CANNOT, AND I SHALL NOT! THE DISTRICT NEEDS LABOR FOR FLOOD RELIEF! WE ARE ROUNDING UP EVERY ABLE-BODIED MAN WE CAN FIND!
DO YOU DENY YOU ARE A RŌNIN, NO FIXED ABODE? IF YOU CAN STOOP IN THE PADDIES LIKE A PEASANT, THEN YOU CAN WORK ON THE LEVEES! WE'LL DRAG YOU IN BY FORCE IF I HAVE TO!

YET I REFUSE!

WHA —?!

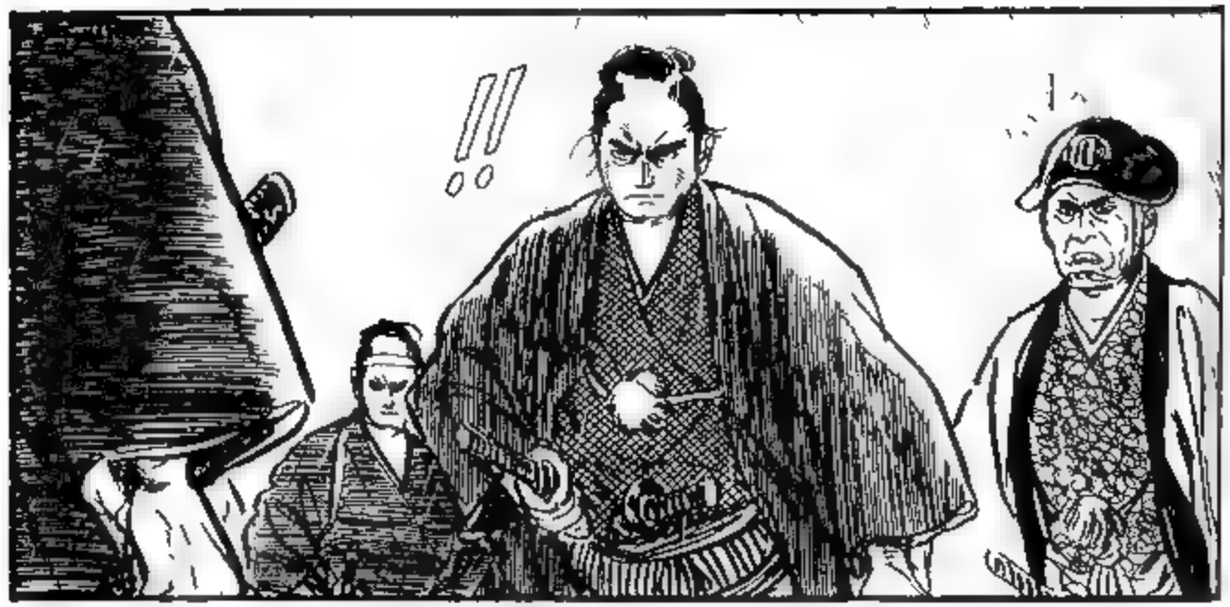
NO!! WAIT!

YOU OFFER NO *NAME.*
FOR ME TO DO SO WOULD CAUSE YOU DIFFICULTY
BEST TO THINK OF ME AS A PASSING *RŌNIN*, NO MORE.


I DON'T CARE! FROM YOUR CARRIAGE AND THE SET OF YOUR EYES, I CAN SEE YOU ARE NO ORDINARY MAN!
I AM *ICHIGE JIHEITA, YOKOMETSUKE* OF THE KANAMASHI DISTRICT

FORMER *KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN ŌGAMI ITTŌ!*

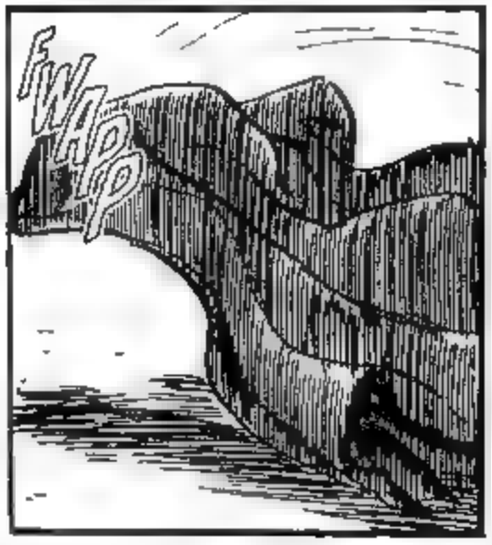
O. ŌGAMI ITTŌ?!
WHAT NOW?! KILL ME, AND THE YAGYŪ WILL EMBRACE YOU. YOUR ADVANCEMENT WILL BE ASSURED!
BUT DO NOTHING UPON HEARING MY NAME..
AND YOUR VERY HONOR WILL BE AT STAKE.
YES, YES, AND YET ..TO FACE YOUR SUIŌ-RYŪ... SWORDWORK THAT EVEN THE YAGYŪ CANNOT DEFEAT
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY ARE. ARE. RANG!

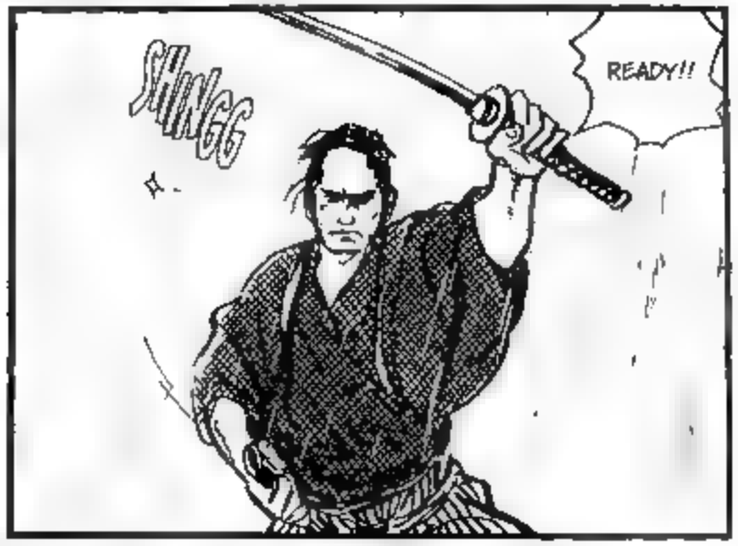


ICHIGE, NO! THIS IS MADNESS!
WE LIVE BY THE SWORD!! WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO PROVE THEMSELVES THE STRONGEST OF THEIR GENERATION?!

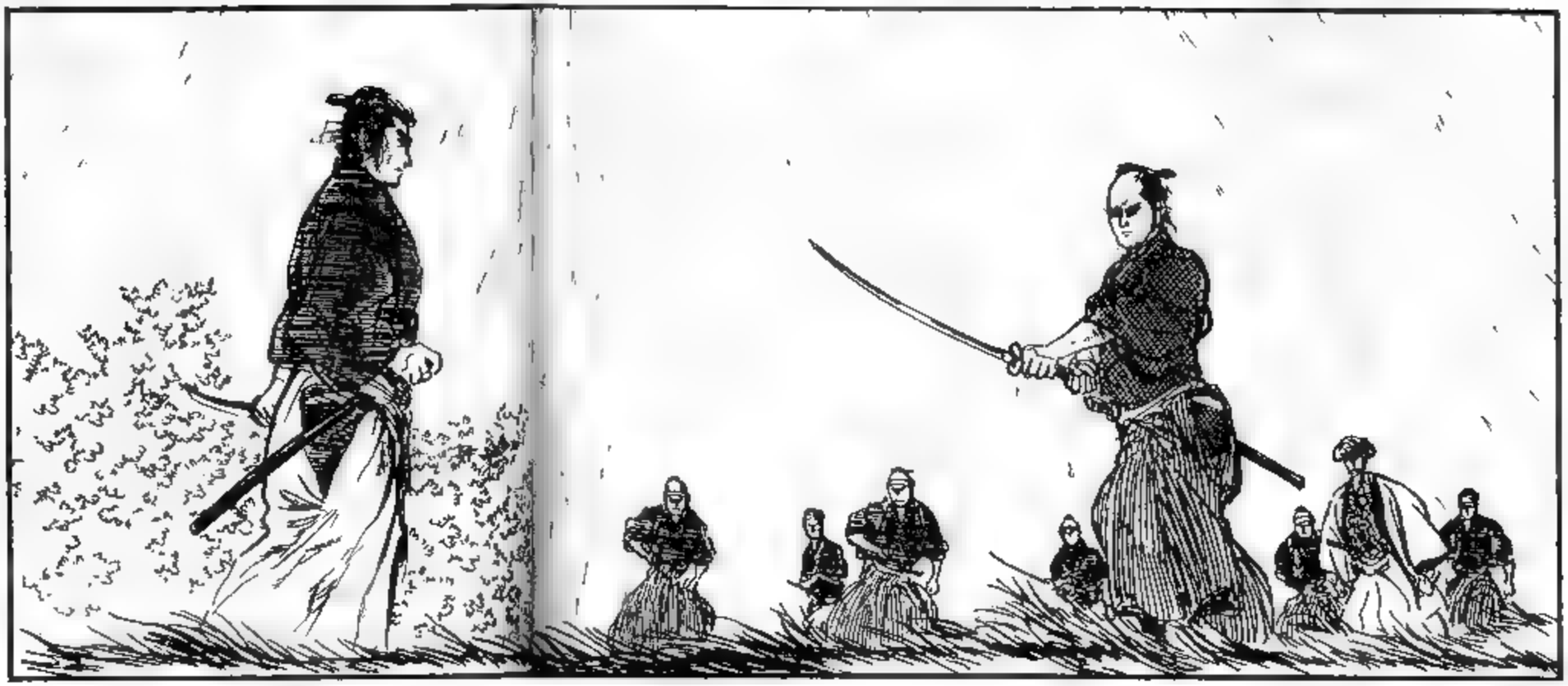
I COULD NOT PRAY FOR A BETTER OPPORTUNITY

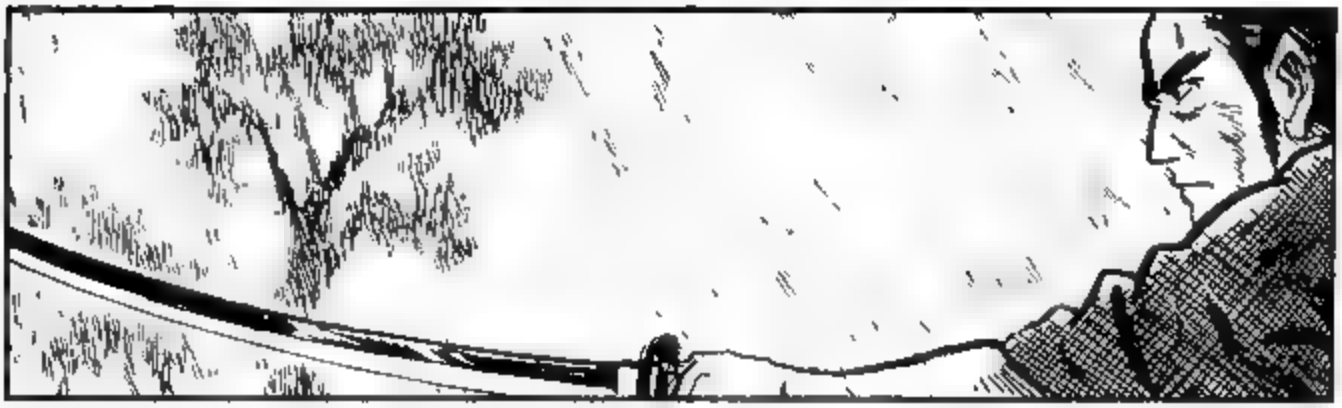
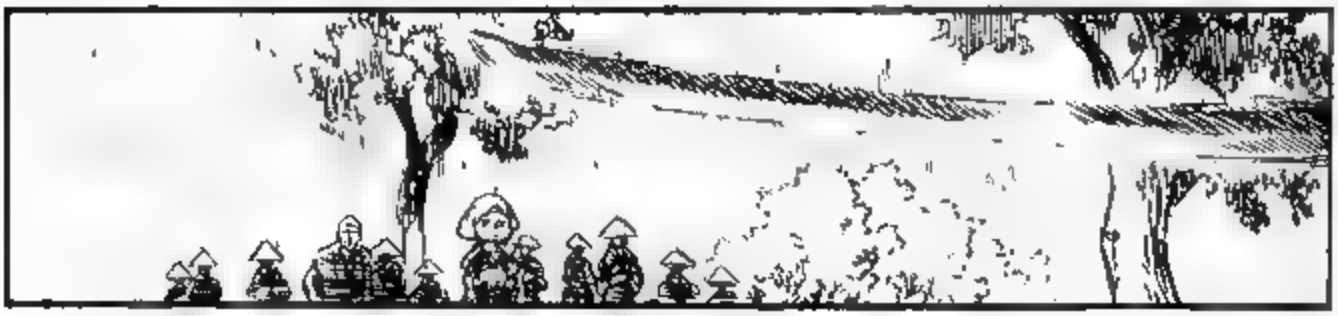
STOP! DON'T DO IT!! DON'T BE SWEPT AWAY BY FOOLISH AMBITION, ICHIGE!
I HAVE SOME SKILL IN NEN-RYŪ
..AND ŌGAMI ITTŌ IS AN OPPONENT BEYOND REPROACH!


FWAPP

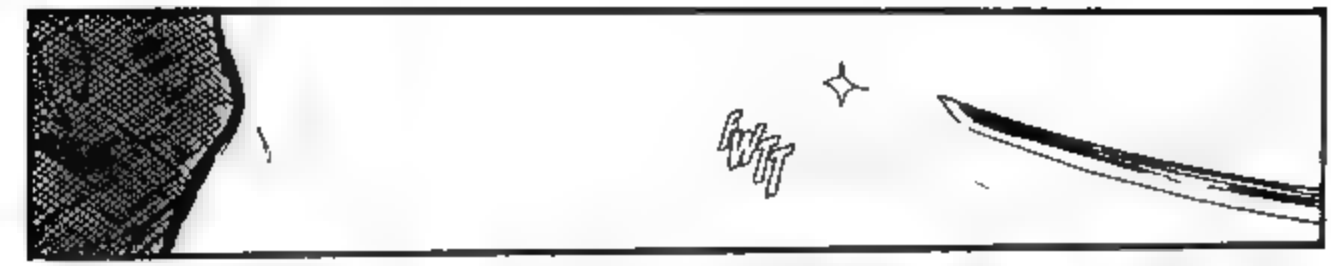

SHINGG
READY!!

SO BE IT.

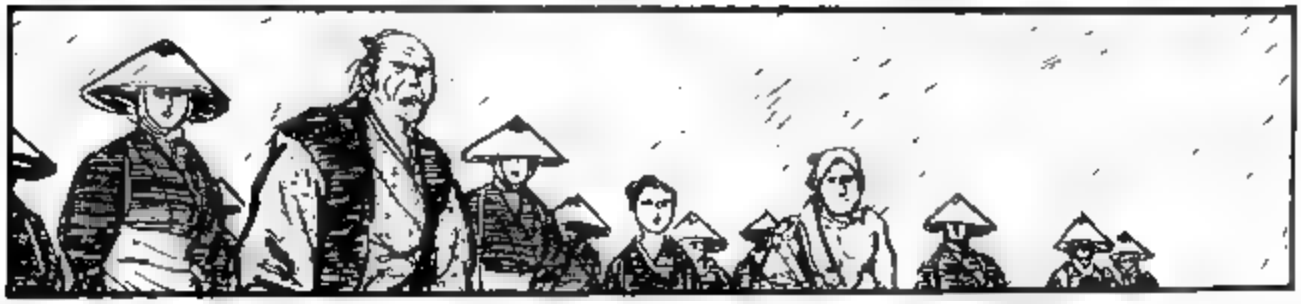


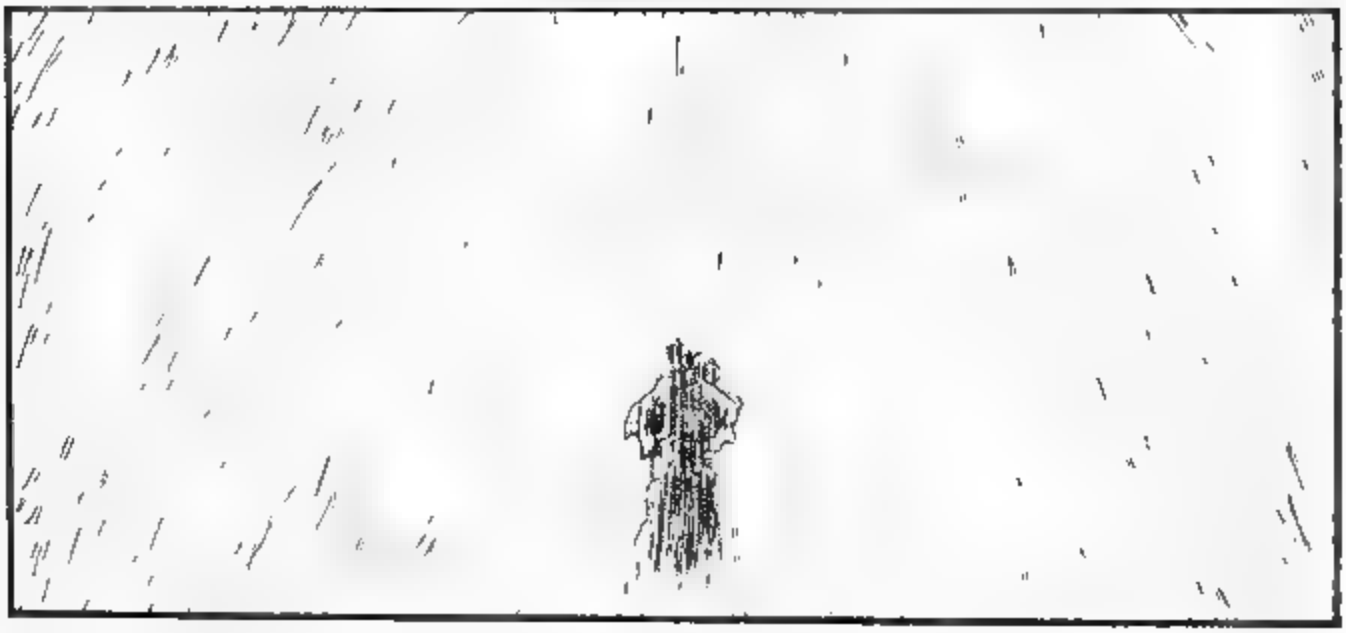
HYAAA...
AAH?! NUU!!
D-DAMN!
AH... NNG...

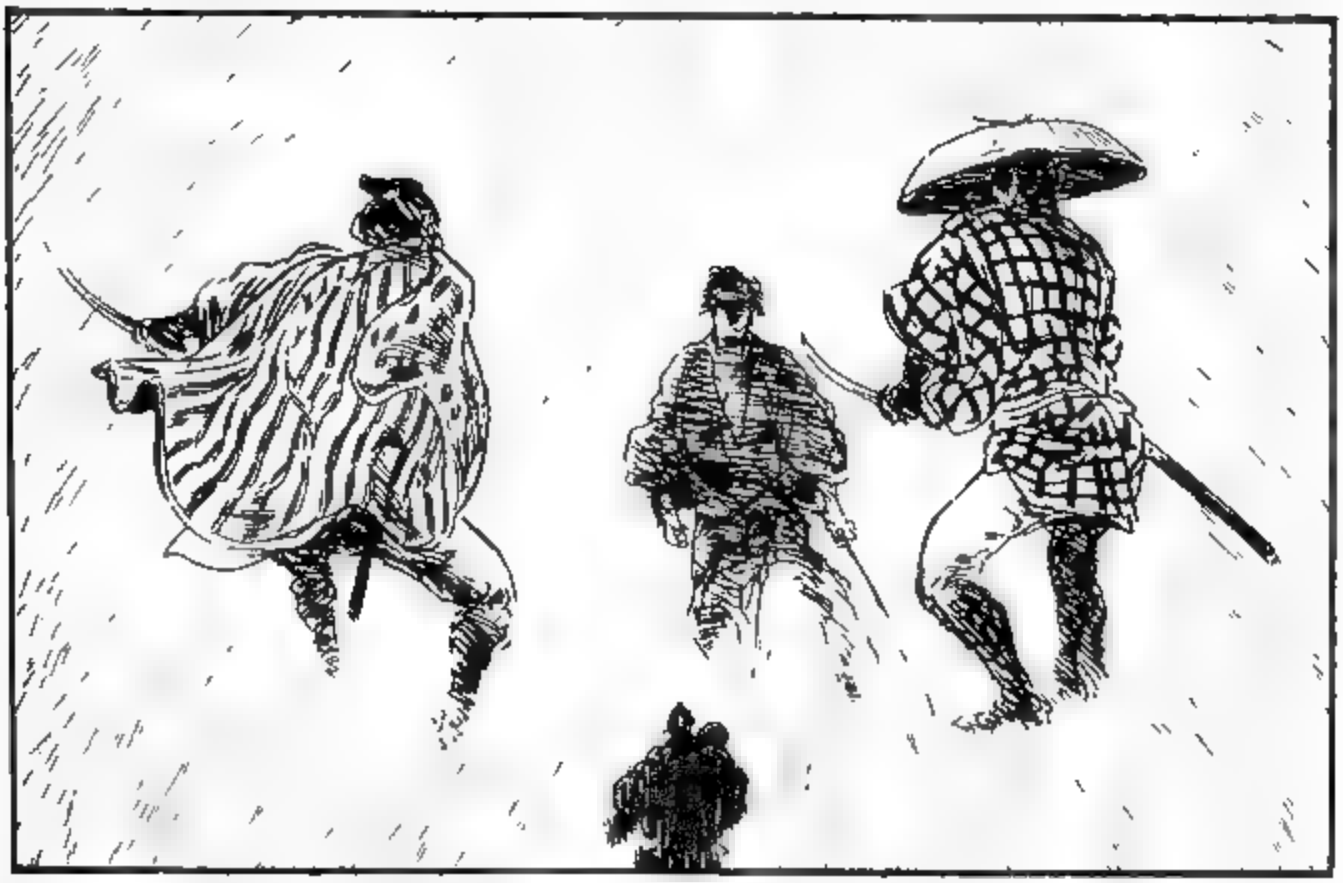


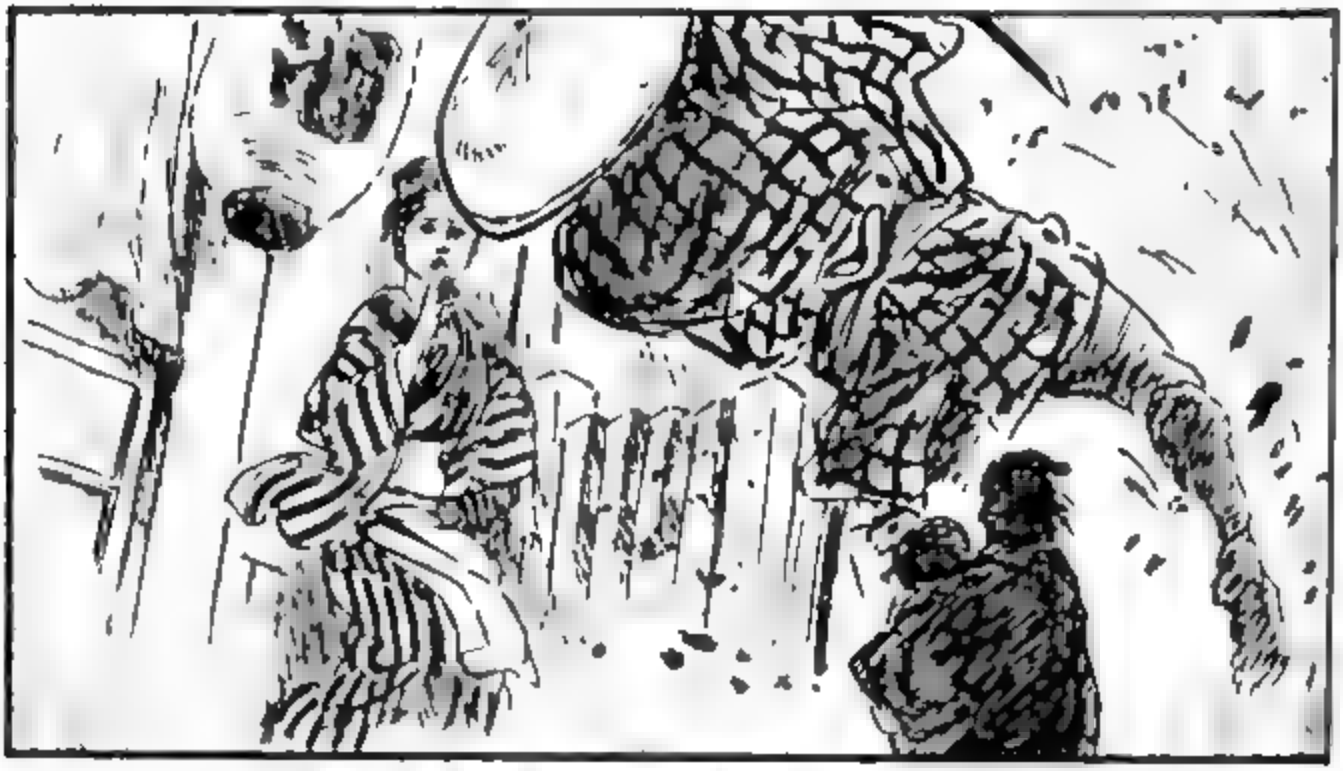
SHKK

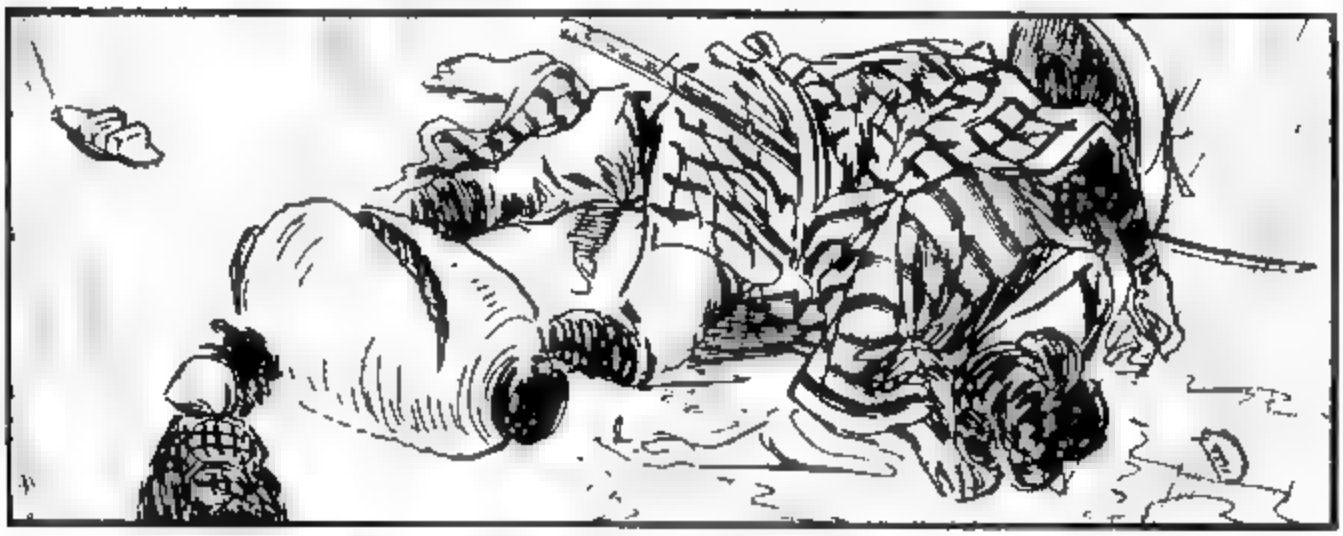


WE. WE SAW NOBODY!
THAT MONSTER ŌGAMI ITTŌ NEVER CAME TO OUR DISTRICT! NEVER! ALL OF YOU— DO YOU UNDER-STAND?!









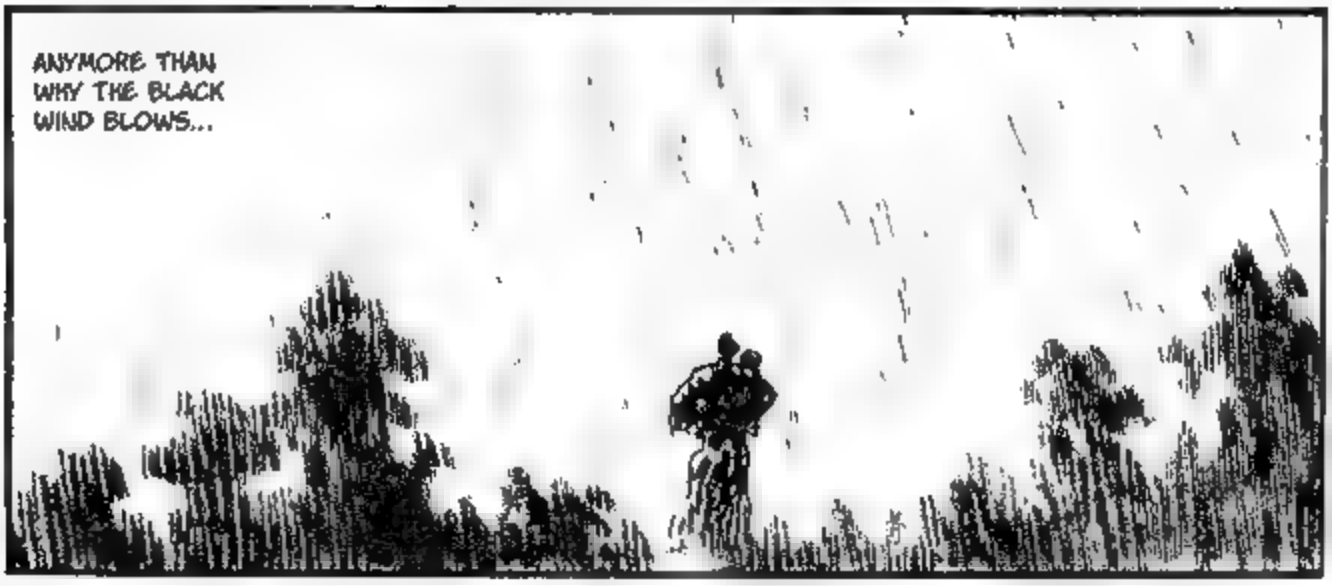
IT ..IT'S PLANTING TIME...I...I CAN ALMOST HEAR IT... THE PLANTING SONG .I WISH .I COULD BE THERE ONE LAST T-TIME

ŌGAMI HAD LIVED TRUE TO HIS ASSASSIN'S ROAD, AND SO AN INNOCENT GIRL HAD DIED.
THE HEARTLESS END TO A LIFE TOO FULL OF TRAGEDY, A CHILD SOLD TO THE PROCURERS BY IMPOVERISHED PARENTS. YET WITH HER DYING BREATH, SHE STILL LONGED FOR HOME.

UNKNOWN TO ALL, ITTŌ HAD PLANTED STRANDS OF THE YOUNG WOMAN'S HAIR WITH EACH SHOOT OF RICE.

UNKNOWN TO ALL...

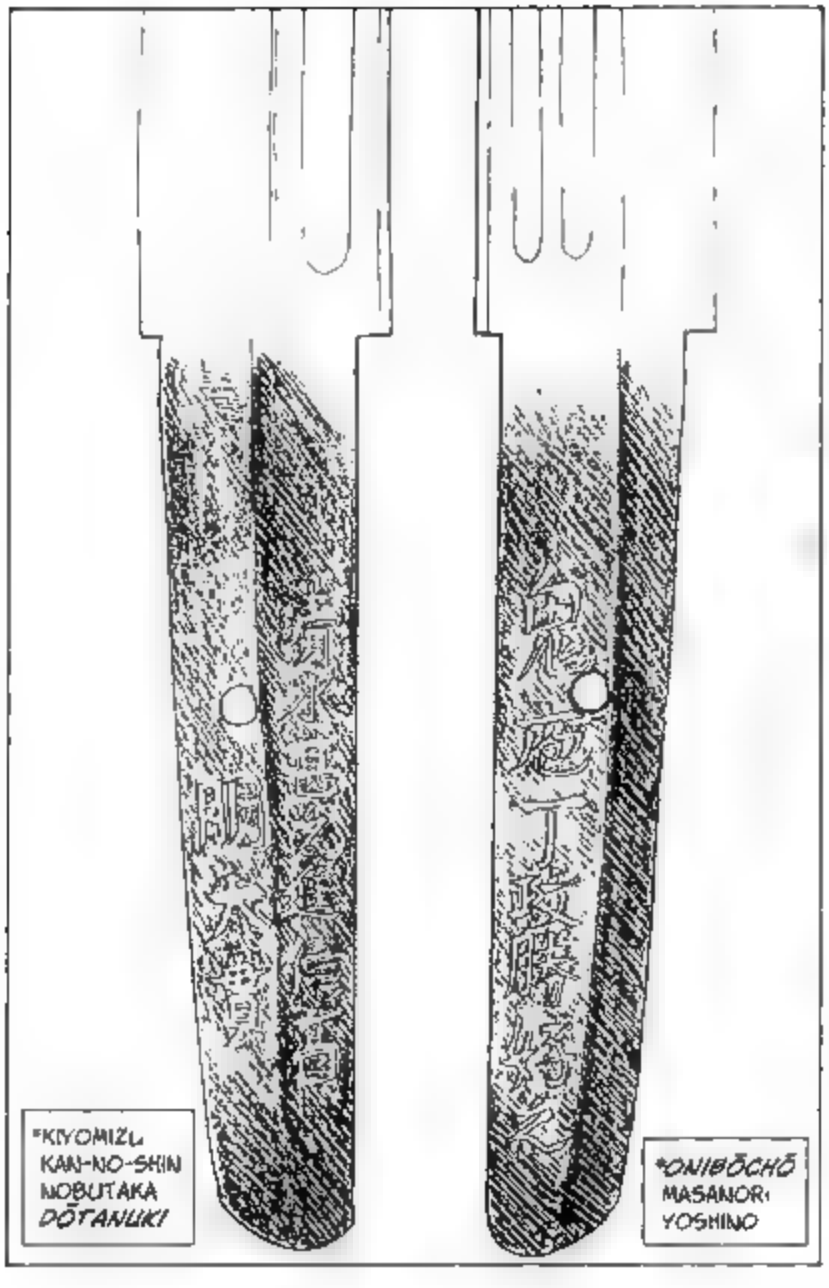
WHY HAD HE COME TO THIS SMALL VILLAGE? NONE THERE WOULD EVER KNOW.


ANYMORE THAN WHY THE BLACK WIND BLOWS...

MangaProject.cjb.net
Scanner: Mavi

the twenty-seventh

# Decapitate Asaemon



## YAMADA ASAEMON

THE FIRST, SADATOKI. DIED DECEMBER 18, THE FIRST YEAR OF *KYŌHŌ*, 1716

THE SECOND YOSHITOKI. DIED APRIL 19, THE FIRST YEAR OF *ENKYŌ*, 1744

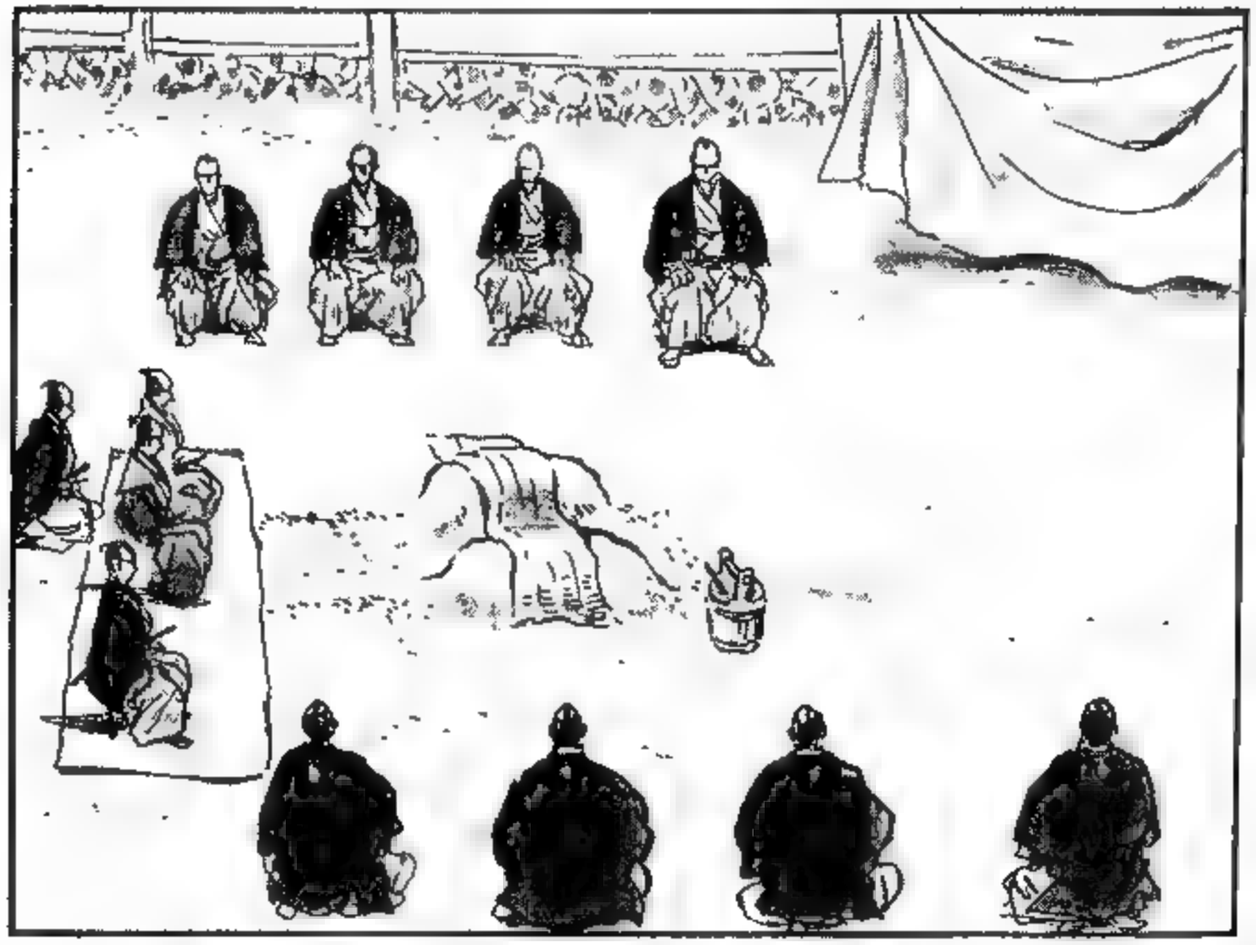
*THE THIRD, YOSHITSUGU. DIED MAY 22, THE SEVENTH YEAR OF MEIWA, 1770.*

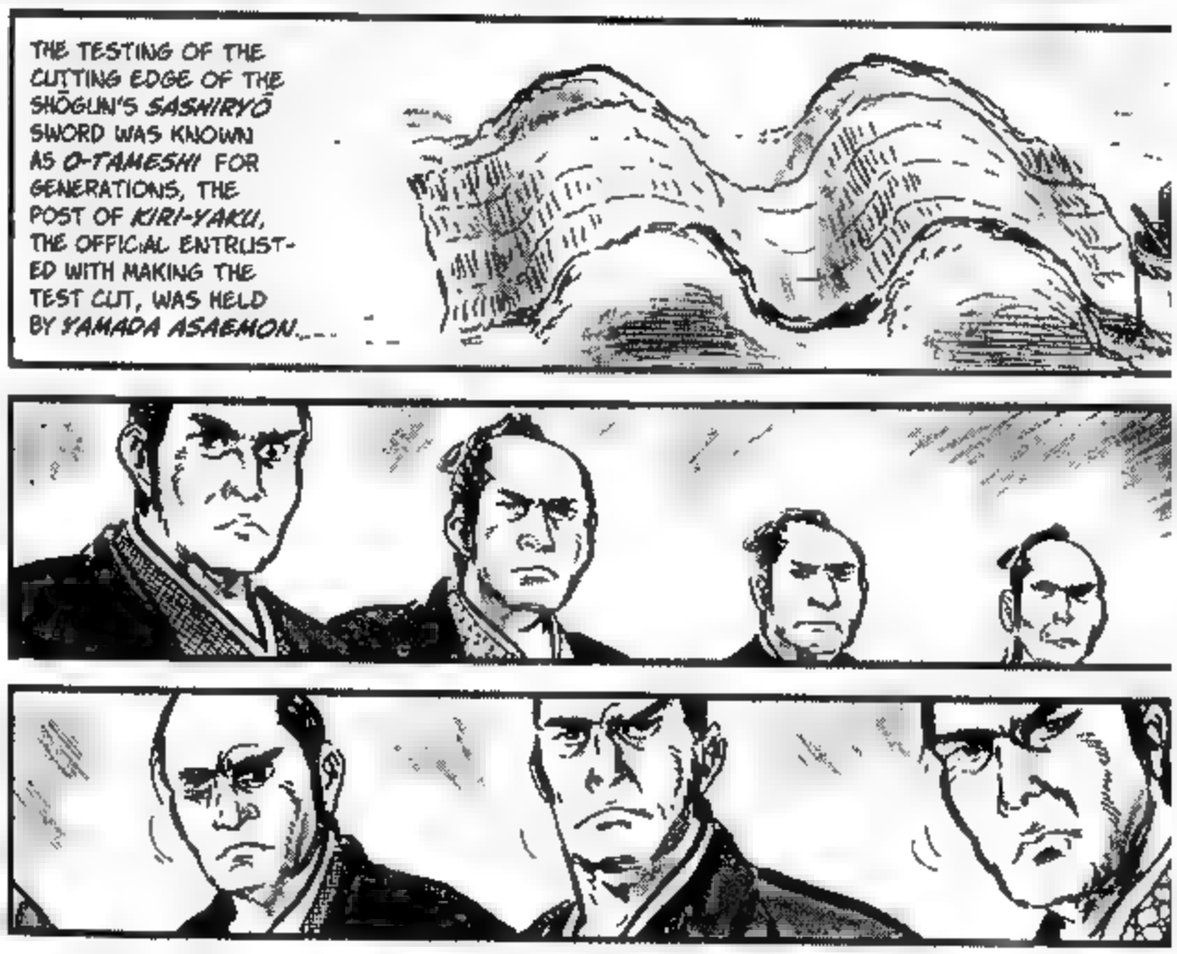
THE FOURTH, YOSHITOMO. DIED SEPTEMEBER 17, THE FIRST YEAR OF *TENMEI*, 1786.

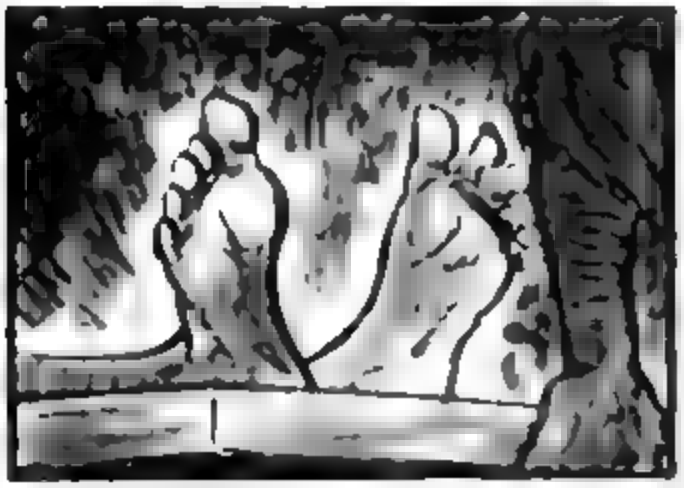
THE FIFTH, YOSHIMUTSU. DIED FEBRUARY 9, THE SIXTH YEAR OF *BUNSEI*, 1823.

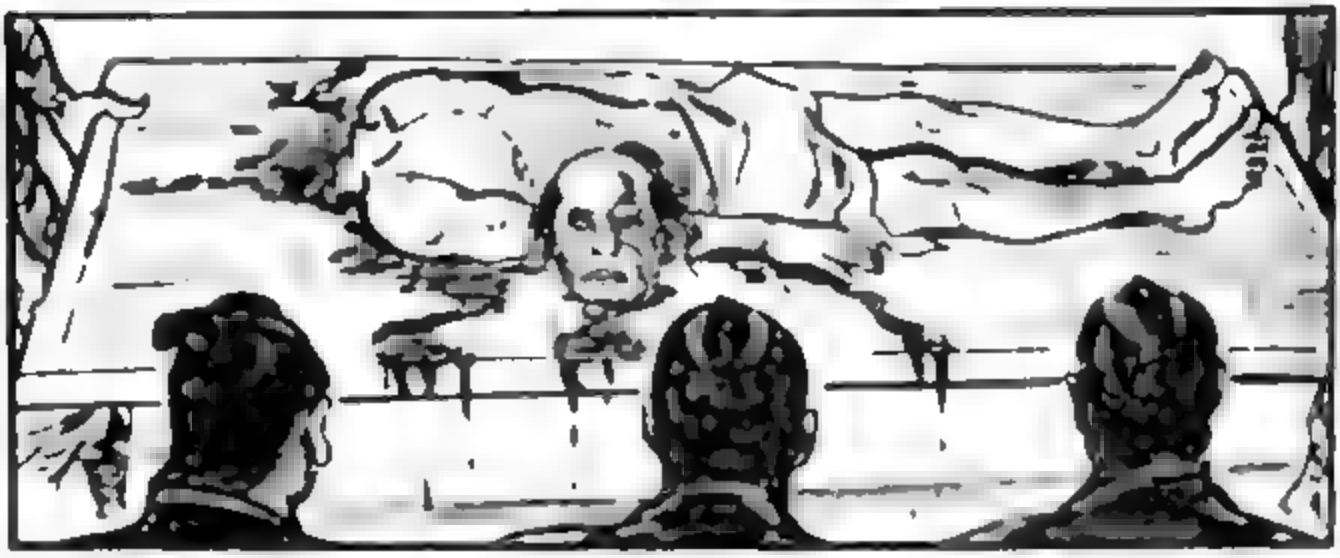
THE SIXTH, YOSHIMASA. DIED JUNE 17, THE FIFTH YEAR OF *KAEI*, 1852.

THE SEVENTH, YOSHITOSHI. DIED DECEMBER 29, THE SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF *MEIJI*, 1882

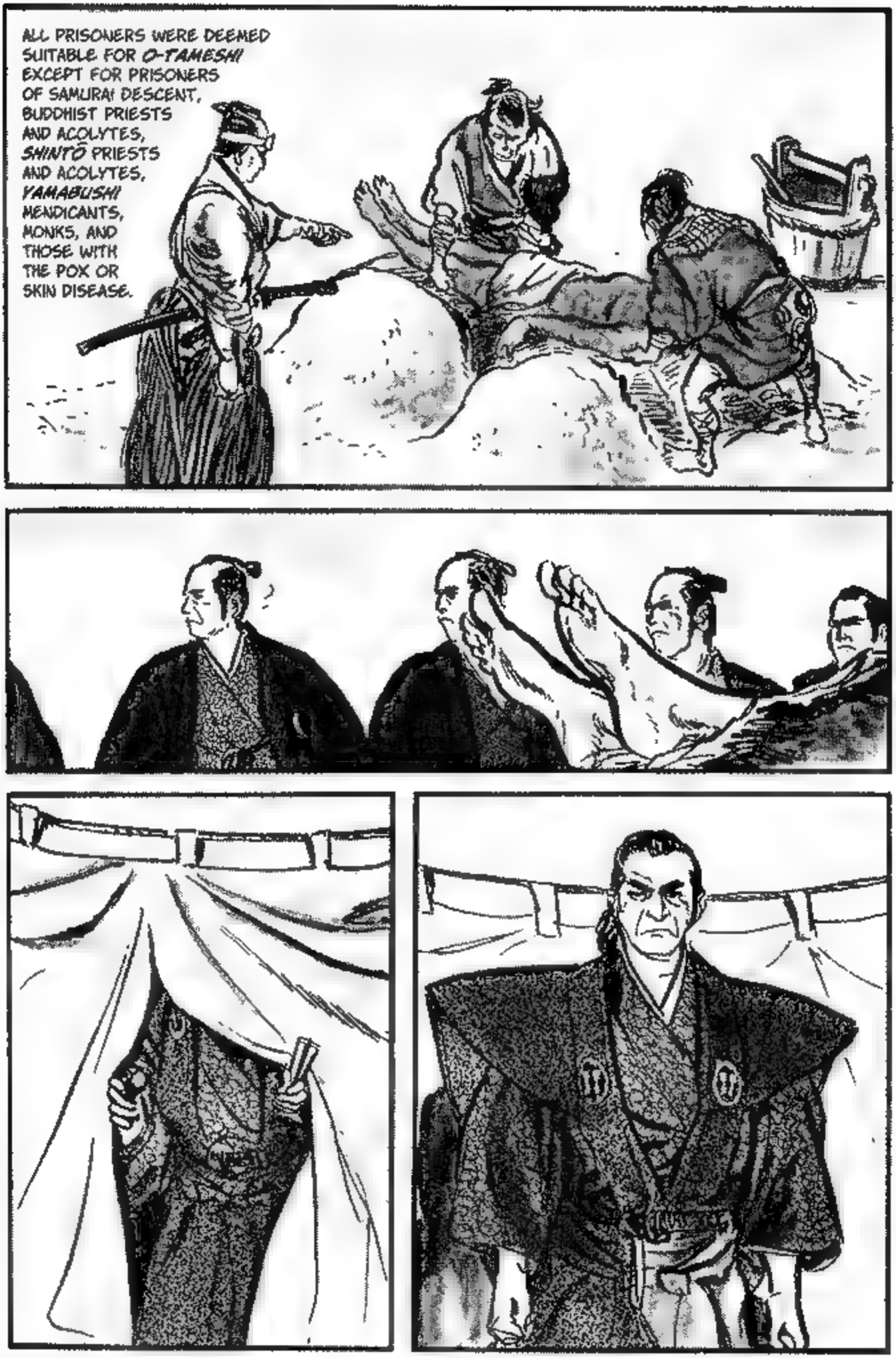


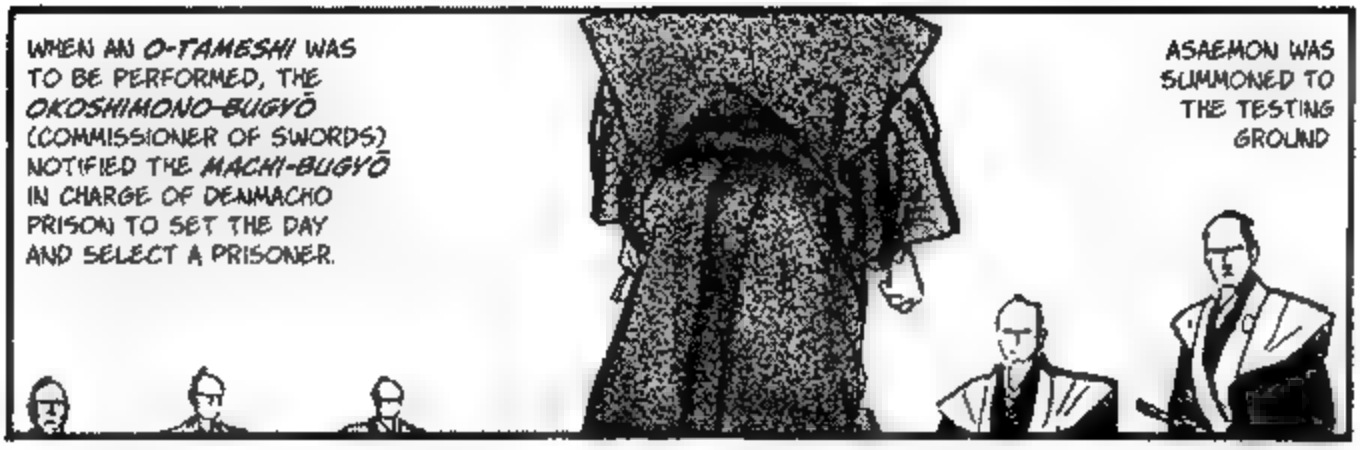

THE TESTING OF THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE SHŌGUN'S *SASHIRYŌ* SWORD WAS KNOWN AS *O-TAMESHI* FOR GENERATIONS, THE POST OF *KIRI-YAKU*, THE OFFICIAL ENTRUSTED WITH MAKING THE TEST CUT, WAS HELD BY *YAMADA ASAEMON*...

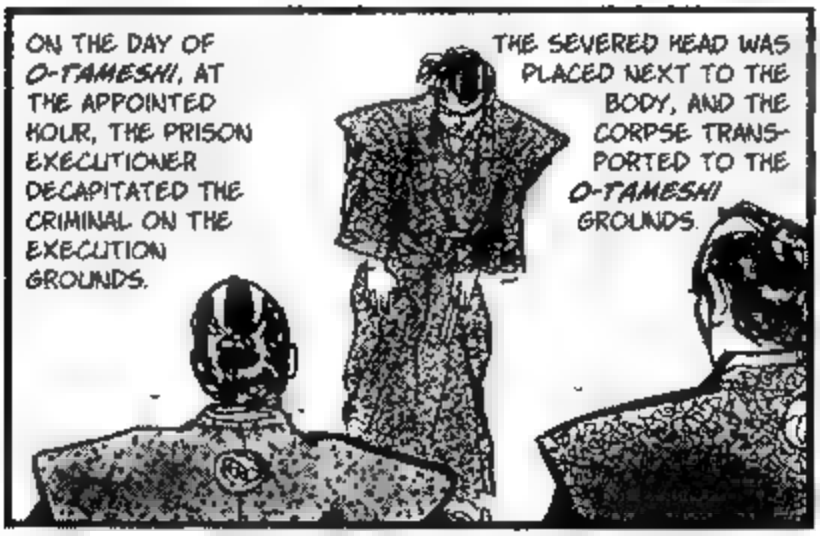




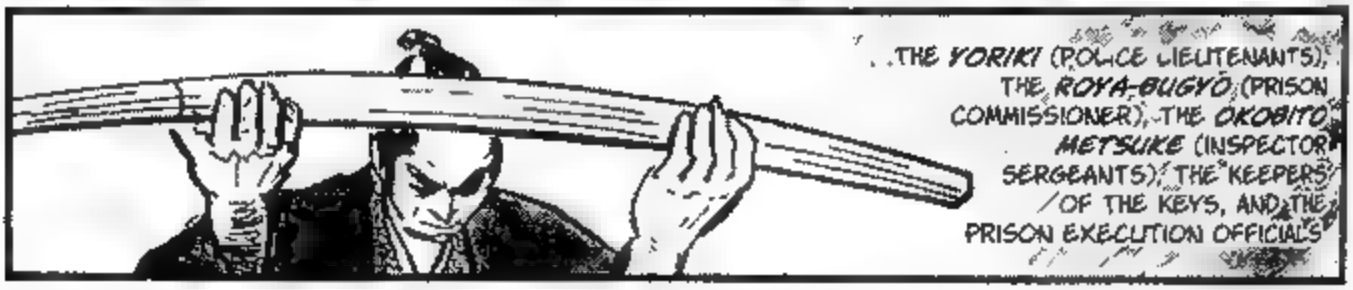
Death Penalty:
The head shall be severed from the body, and the corpse used for o-tameshi.
- The O-Sadamegaki, Article One Hundred.

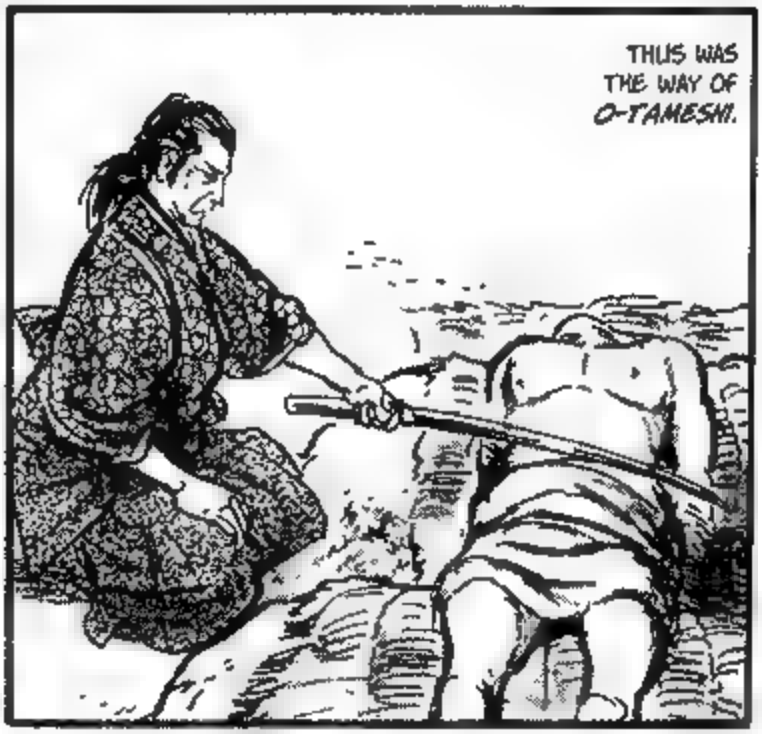

ALL PRISONERS WERE DEEMED SUITABLE FOR *O-TAMESHI* EXCEPT FOR PRISONERS OF SAMURAI DESCENT, BUDDHIST PRIESTS AND ACOLYTES, *SHINTŌ* PRIESTS AND ACOLYTES, *YAMABUSHI* MENDICANTS, MONKS, AND THOSE WITH THE POX OR SKIN DISEASE.

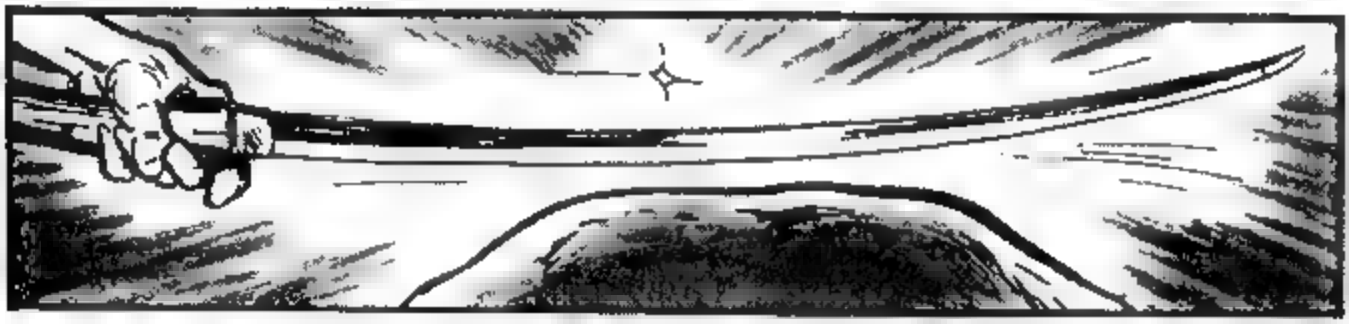

WHEN AN *O-TAMESHI* WAS TO BE PERFORMED, THE *OKOSHIMONO-BUGYŌ* (COMMISSIONER OF SWORDS) NOTIFIED THE *MACHI-BUGYŌ* IN CHARGE OF DENMACHO PRISON TO SET THE DAY AND SELECT A PRISONER.
ASAEMON WAS SUMMONED TO THE TESTING GROUND


ON THE DAY OF *O-TAMESHI*, AT THE APPOINTED HOUR, THE PRISON EXECUTIONER DECAPITATED THE CRIMINAL ON THE EXECUTION GROUNDS.
THE SEVERED HEAD WAS PLACED NEXT TO THE BODY, AND THE CORPSE TRANSPORTED TO THE *O-TAMESHI* GROUNDS.

IN ATTENDANCE AT THE TESTING GROUND WERE THE *OKOSHIMONO-BUGYŌ* AND HIS AIDES, THE *OKACHI METSUKE* (PALACE GUARD INSPECTOR), THE *HONAMI* (SWORD APPRAISER), THE PRISON GUARDS...

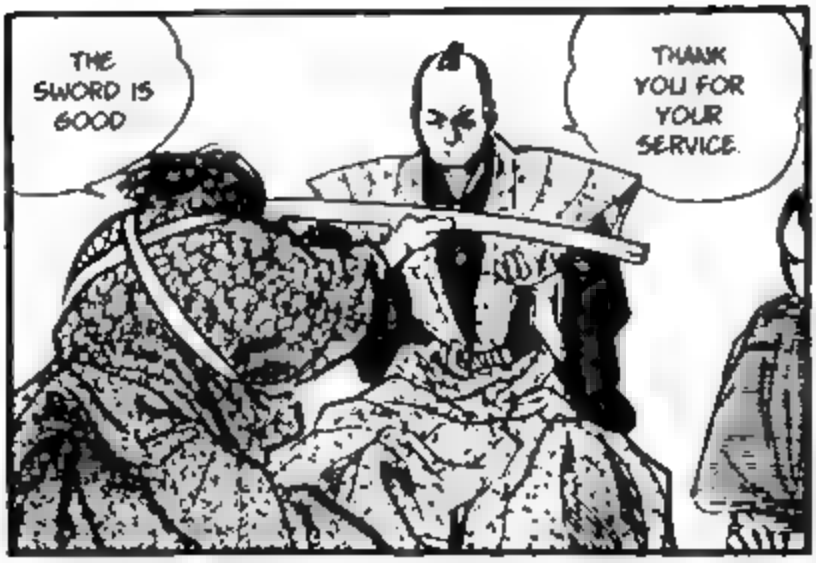

...THE *YORIKI* (POLICE LIEUTENANTS), THE *ROYA-BUGYŌ* (PRISON COMMISSIONER), THE *OKOBITO METSUKE* (INSPECTOR SERGEANTS), THE KEEPERS OF THE KEYS, AND THE PRISON EXECUTION OFFICIALS


THUS WAS THE WAY OF *O-TAMESHI*.



HAHA!

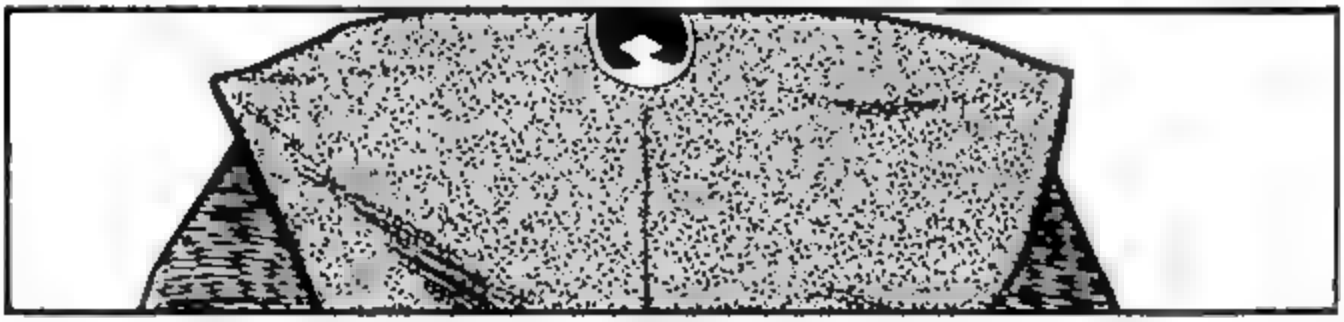
肩井
肩
抽搐
大腿乳搐筋ハ二三ヶ所
金剛行ヲ刷刷刷ヲ要ス
足
大腿
口搐
片車
足
口搐
足
口搐

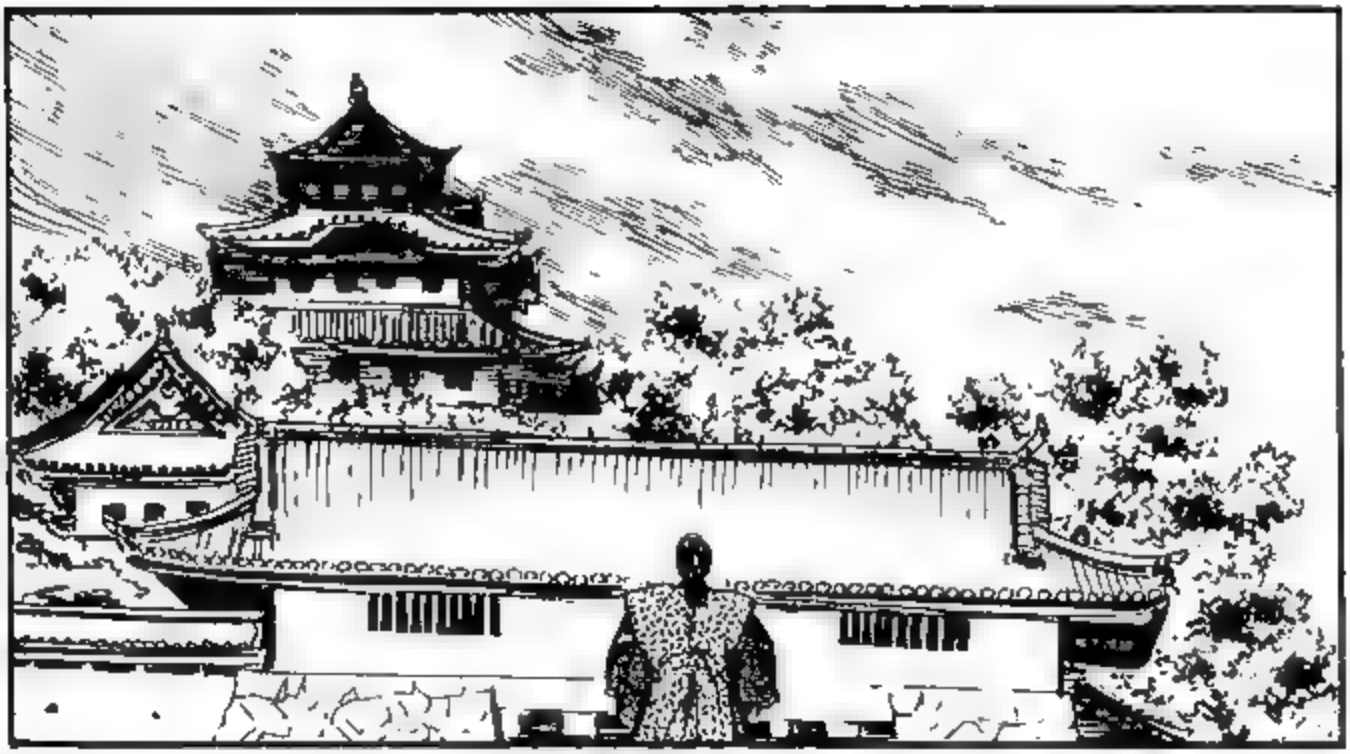

THE SWORD IS GOOD
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.

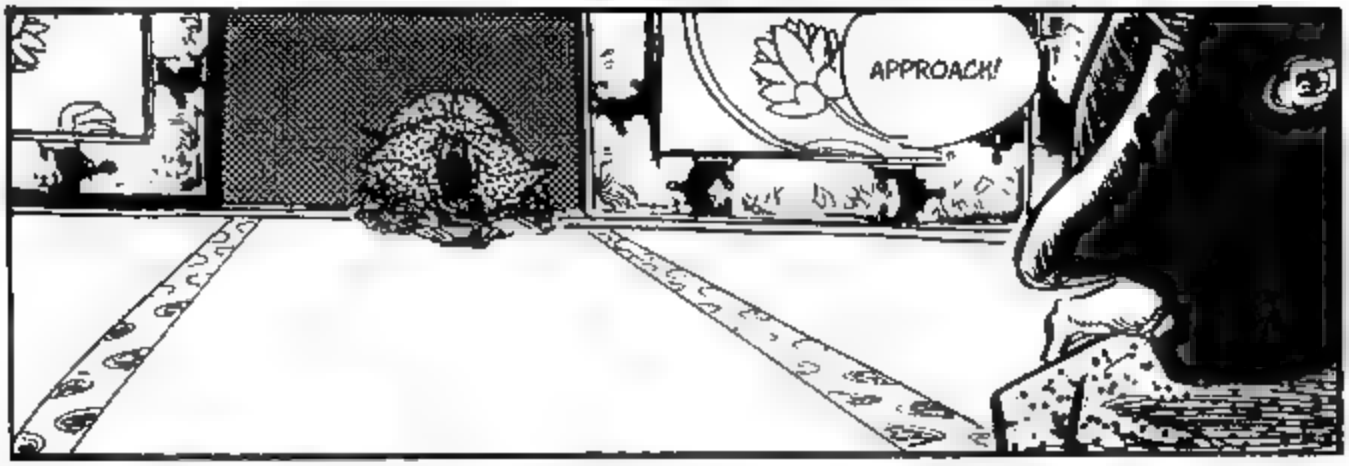
NOW, THE PURIFICATION.
YES, MY LORD!

BY THE WAY, YAMADA-DONO

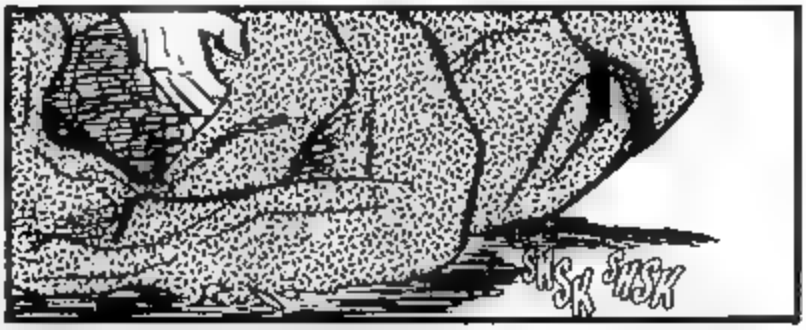
THE *WAKA-DOSHIYORI* KANŌ TŌTŌMI-NO-KAMI AND MIZUNO BUNGO-NO-KAMI REQUEST AN URGENT MEETING.
PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE *GOZA-NO-MA* AUDIENCE CHAMBER IN THE CASTLE.
I UNDERSTAND I WILL GO AS SOON AS I HAVE BEEN PURIFIED





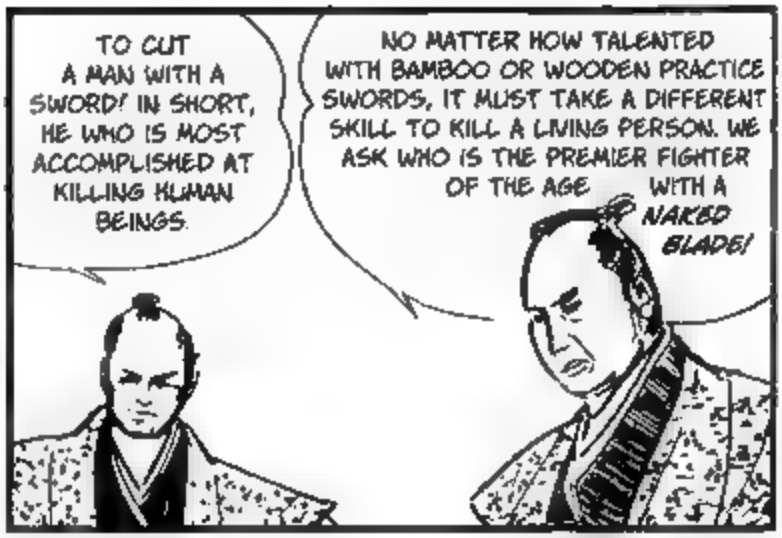

APPROACH!

MY LORDS!


SUSK SUSK

I POSE A QUESTION. WHO IS THE FOREMOST *HITO-KIRI* OF THE AGE?

MY LORD, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION.
WHAT IS *NITO-KIRI*?!


TO CUT A MAN WITH A SWORD! IN SHORT, HE WHO IS MOST ACCOMPLISHED AT KILLING HUMAN BEINGS.
NO MATTER HOW TALENTED WITH BAMBOO OR WOODEN PRACTICE SWORDS, IT MUST TAKE A DIFFERENT SKILL TO KILL A LIVING PERSON. WE ASK WHO IS THE PREMIER FIGHTER OF THE AGE WITH A *NAKED BLADE!*

. . . .
. . . .

YOU MAY SPEAK FREELY, WITHOUT FEAR.
MY LORD!

THEN .FIRST, THE MEN OF THE *YAGYŪ* CLAN. MOST PARTICULARLY, RETSUDŌ-SAMA OF THE *URA-YAGYŪ*.
HMM. .

AND.. THE FORMER *KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN*, ŌGAMI ITTŌ OF THE *SUIŌ* SCHOOL.
THESE TWO WOULD I CHOOSE...

MM!
YET .. YOU OMIT ANOTHER.
. . . .
. . . .

YAMADA ASAEMON *YOSHITSUGU!*

IN OTHER WORDS— *YOURSELF!*

YOU JEST, MY LORD I COULD NOT ASPIRE TO SUCH COMPANY

NO MODESTY HERE! THE YAMADA SCHOOL OF *SUEMONO-GIRI* IS FEARSOME INDEED

IN THE ART OF KILLING, YOU RIVAL ŌGAMI AND THE YAGYŪ.

OTHERWISE, YOU COULD NOT PERFORM OUR LORD THE SHOGUN'S *O-TAMESHI!*

NOW.. TO BUSINESS

NO DOUBT YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE FEUD BETWEEN THE YAGYŪ AND ŌGAMI.

YES.

IT IS MORE THAN TWO YEARS SINCE THE ŌGAMI CLAN WAS DISBARRED!

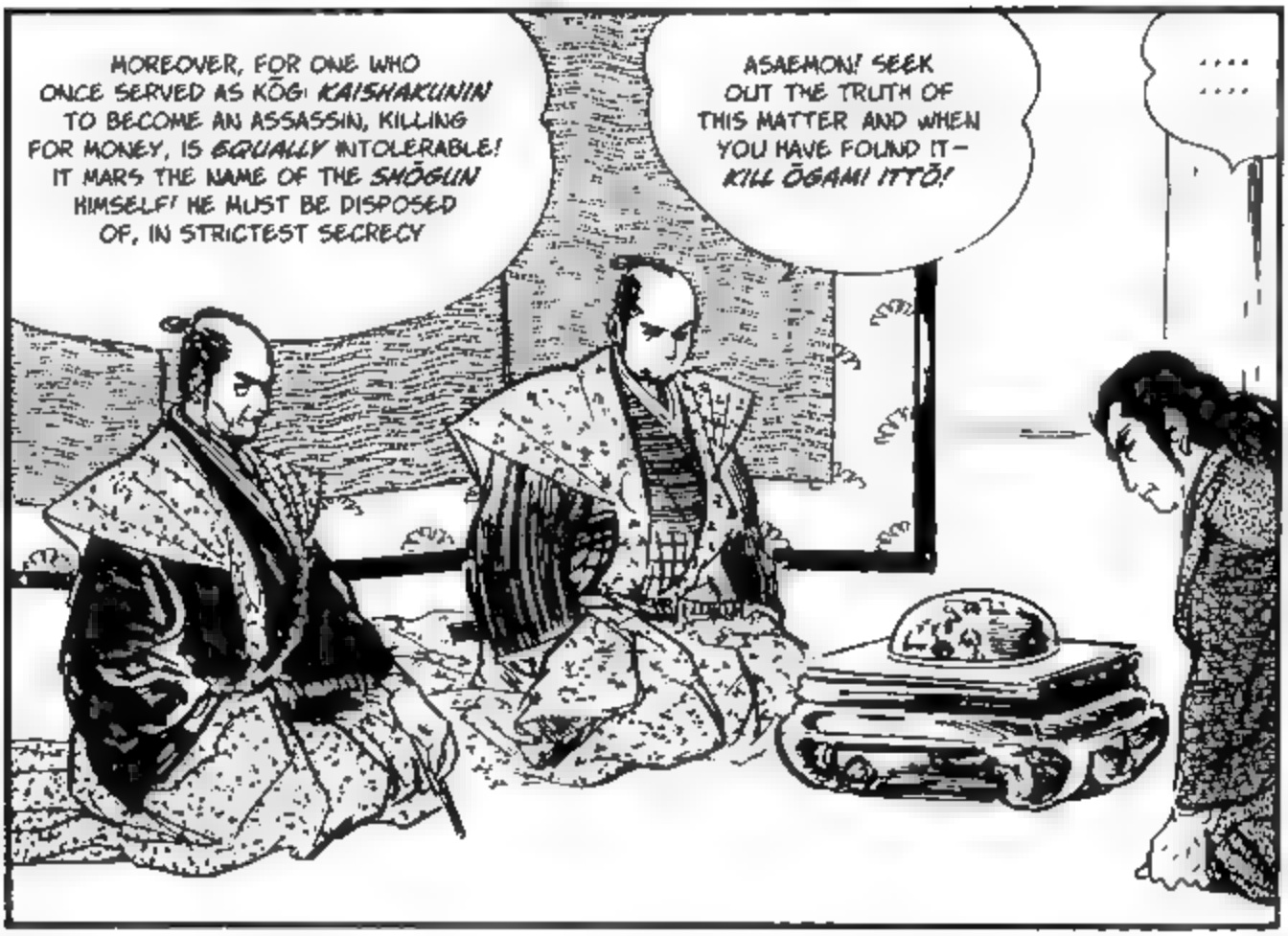
NOW RUMOR HAS IT THAT ITTO HAS BECOME AN *ASSASSIN*, AND WALKS THE ROAD OF *MEIFUMADŌ* WITH HIS ONLY SON.

....

IT IS ALSO RUMORED THAT THE URA-YAGYŪ SO COVETED THE POST OF *KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN* THAT THEY LAID A TRAP FOR ŌGAMI.

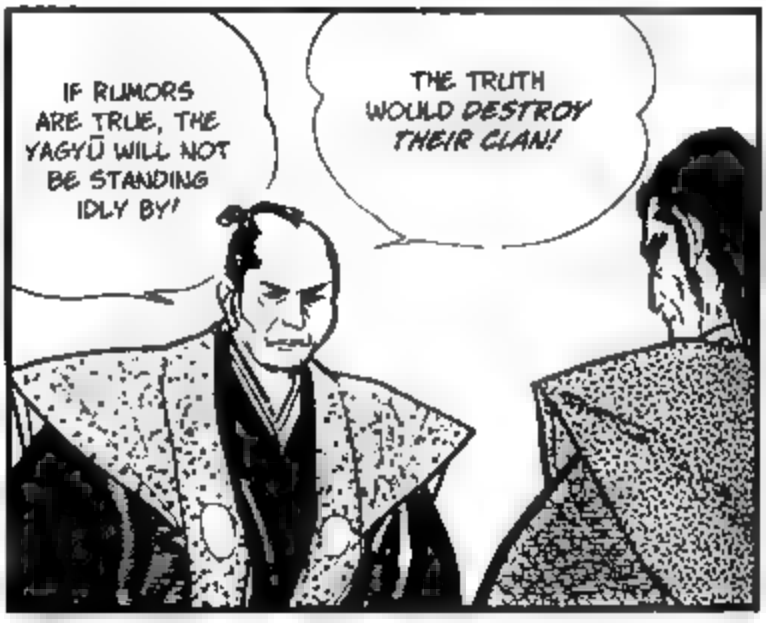
AND THAT ŌGAMI, FALLING VICTIM TO THEIR SCHEMES, BECAME AN ASSASSIN TO CLEAR HIS FAMILY NAME!

GOSSIP RUNS RAMPANT, AND ECHOES IN THE HALLS OF THE SHOGUNATE ITSELF. IF THESE RUMORS SHOULD PROVE TRUE, THEY CANNOT BE IGNORED. THE YAGYU SERVE AS *SŌ-METSUKE* IF THEY DEFY OUR LORD'S WILL AS THEY PLEASE, THEY MUST BE *PUNISHED!*
. . .
. . . .


MOREOVER, FOR ONE WHO ONCE SERVED AS KŌGI *KAISHAKUNIN* TO BECOME AN ASSASSIN, KILLING FOR MONEY, IS *EQUALLY* INTOLERABLE! IT MARS THE NAME OF THE *SHŌGUN* HIMSELF! HE MUST BE DISPOSED OF, IN STRICTEST SECRECY
ASAEMON! SEEK OUT THE TRUTH OF THIS MATTER AND WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND IT— *KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!*
. . . .
. . . .

*WE* SHALL INVESTIGATE THE YAGYŪ.

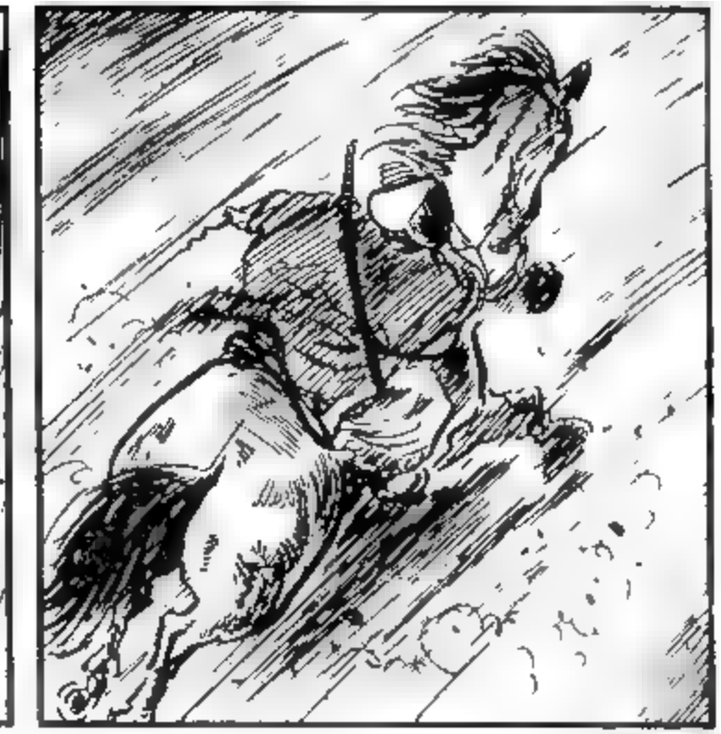
WHY ENTRUST THIS WEIGHTY TASK TO ONE SUCH AS ME. ?


IF RUMORS ARE TRUE, THE YAGYŪ WILL NOT BE STANDING IDLY BY!
THE TRUTH WOULD *DESTROY THEIR CLAN!*

THERE IS NO OTHER MAN ALIVE WHO CAN FACE BOTH THE ASSASSIN SWORDS OF THE YAGYU AND THE EXECUTIONER'S SWORD OF ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
AND MOREOVER—ŌGAMI ITTŌ WAS ONCE KAISHAKUNIN SEVERING THE HEADS OF LIVING MEN! YOU, TOO HAVE DONE THIS YOU ARE OF DIFFERENT RANK, YET THERE MAY BE AN UNDERSTANDING, DECAPITATOR TO DECAPITATOR!
ACCORDING TO THE O-NINMAMAN ŌGAMI ITTŌ TRAVELS SOUTH ALONG THE SANYŌDŌ BYWAY

RIDE LIKE THE WIND! YOU WILL OVERTAKE HIM IN TEN DAYS OR LESS
AND BE WARE OF THE YAGYU!

MY LORDS...!



TAKATA
TAKATA
TAKATA

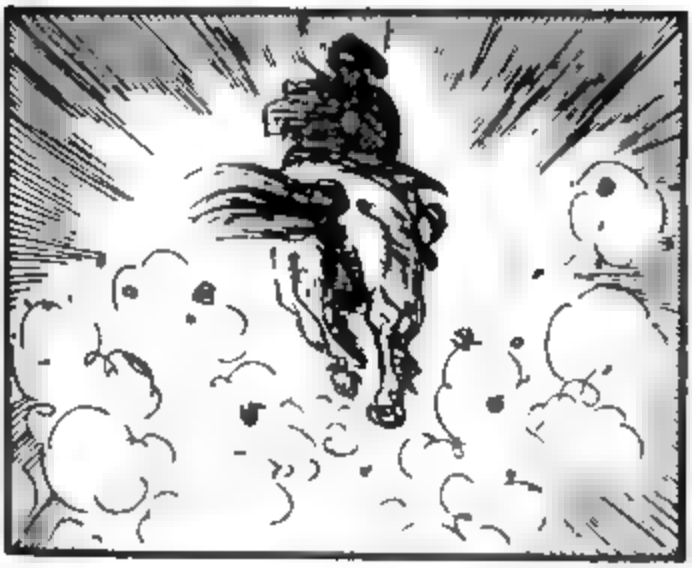
TAKATA
KTOK KTOK KTOK

TAKATTA
TAKATTA

*KŌGI GO-YŌ
公儀御用

I RIDE ON THE SHŌGUN'S BUSINESS! LET ME PASS!

KWHOO
KWHOO
KWHOO



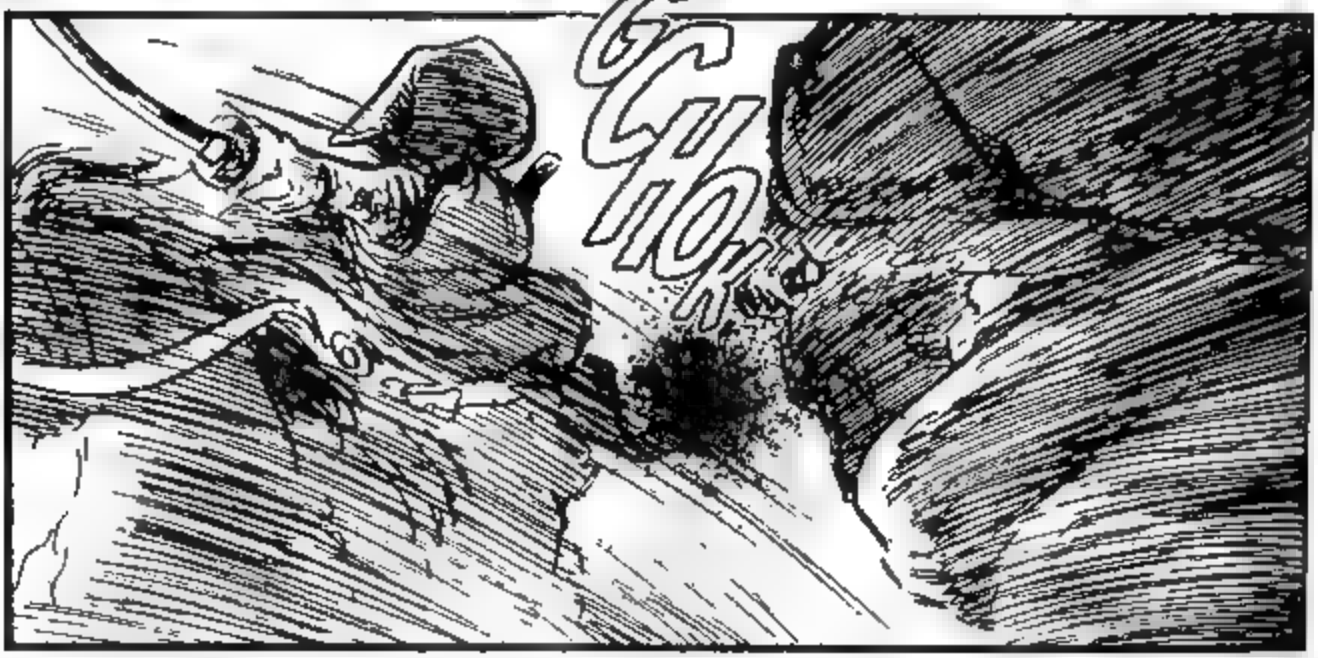
IT'S YAMADA-SAMA! THE MAN THEY WARNED US ABOUT!
ASAEMON THE DECAPITATOR?!

SPISSH
SPISSH

SKRSSH
SKRSSH

SH

URA-
YAGYÜ
...?!


GUK!

WHOK

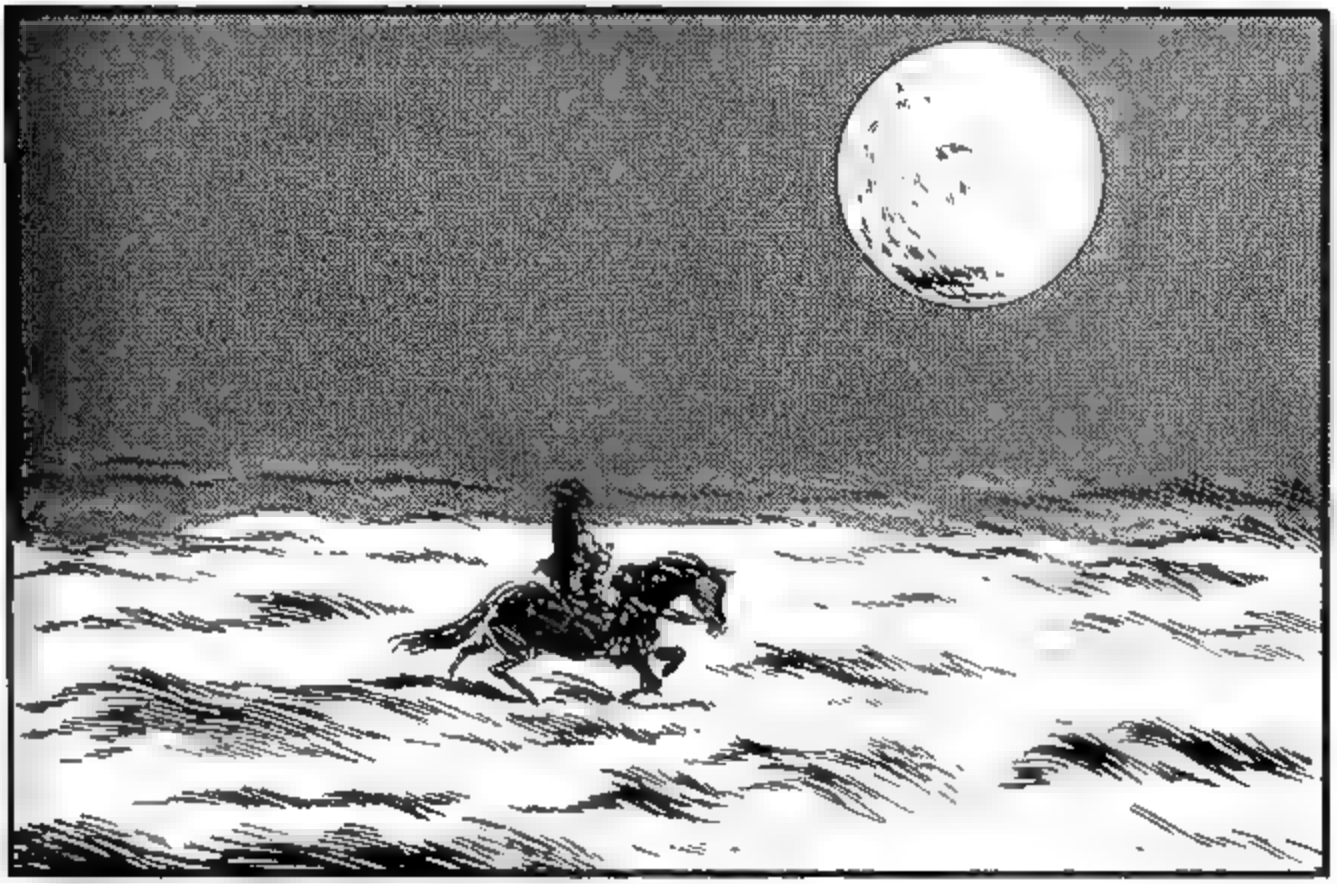
FWKKK

SPITT

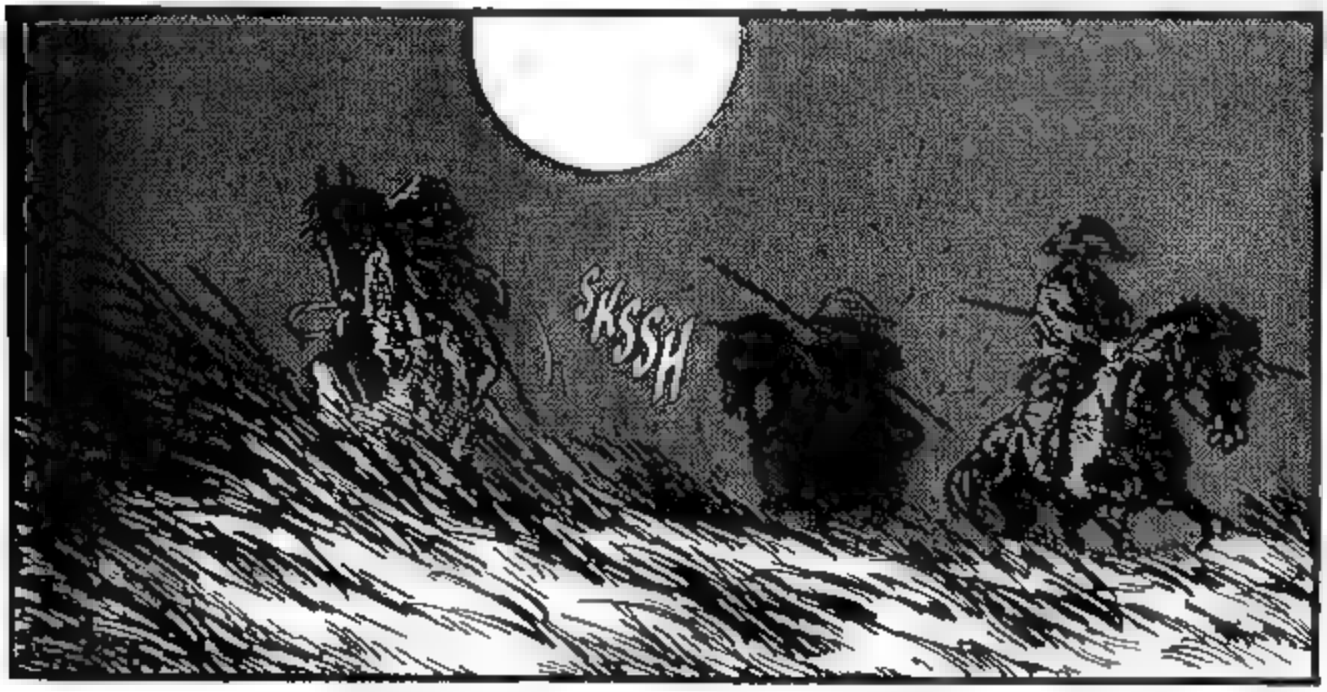
SHWWK

KCHK

IF THE URA-YAGYŪ ATTACK
...THEN THE RUMORS ARE TRUE!

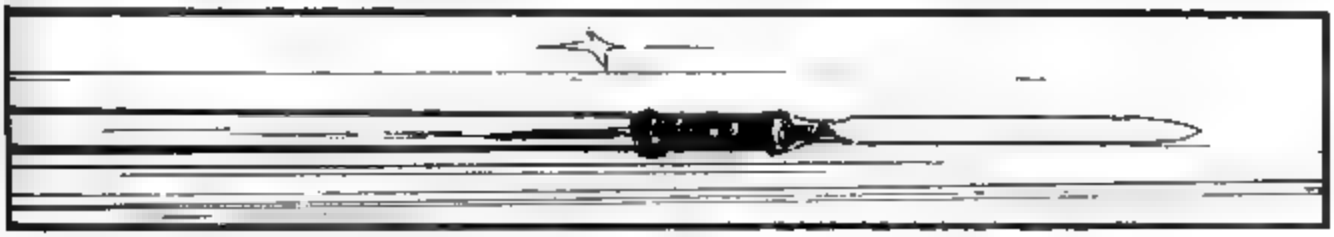


KSSHH


SKSSH

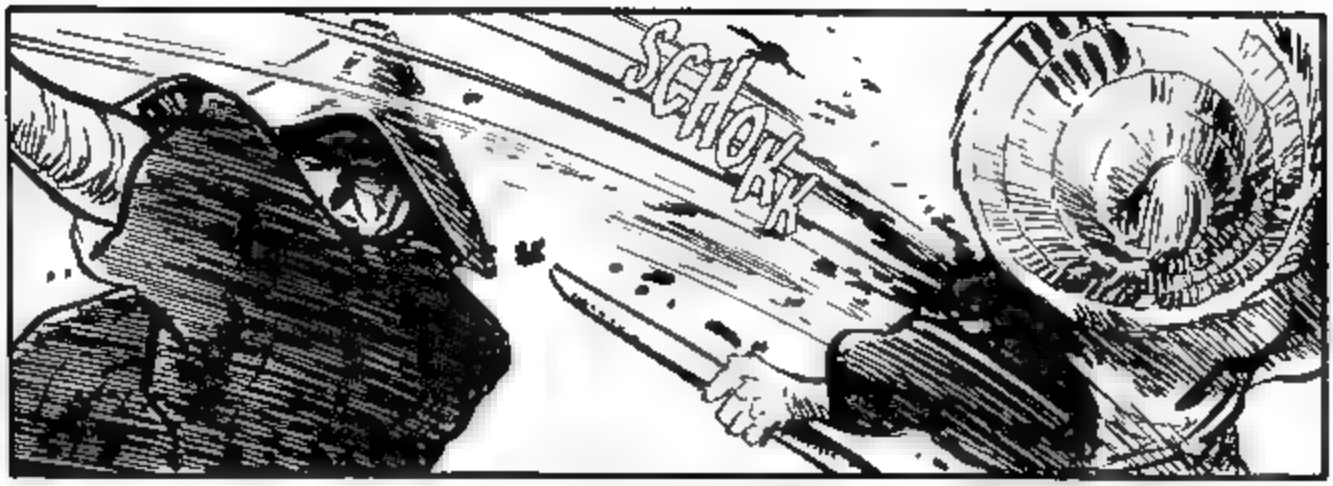
KWIDD
KWIDD

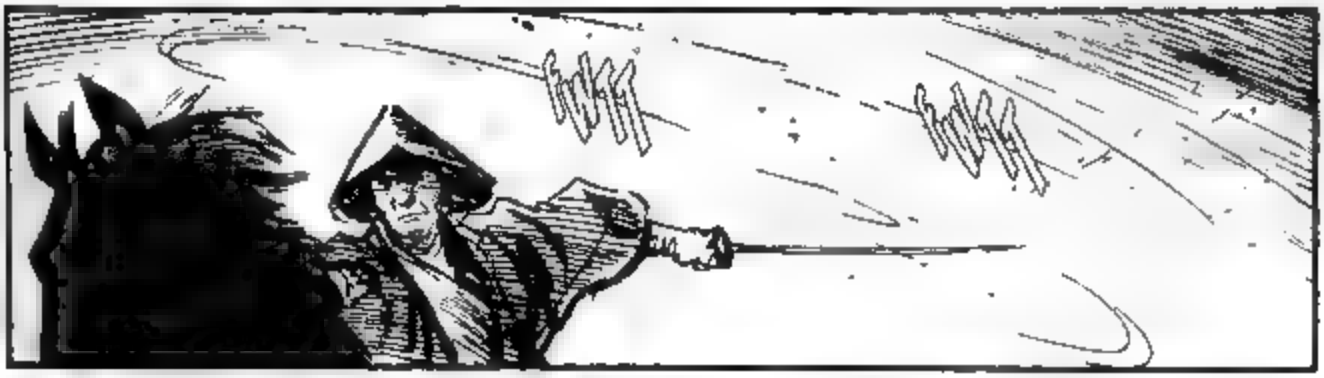
WHSSSH!



CHOK

SKLCH


SCHOK

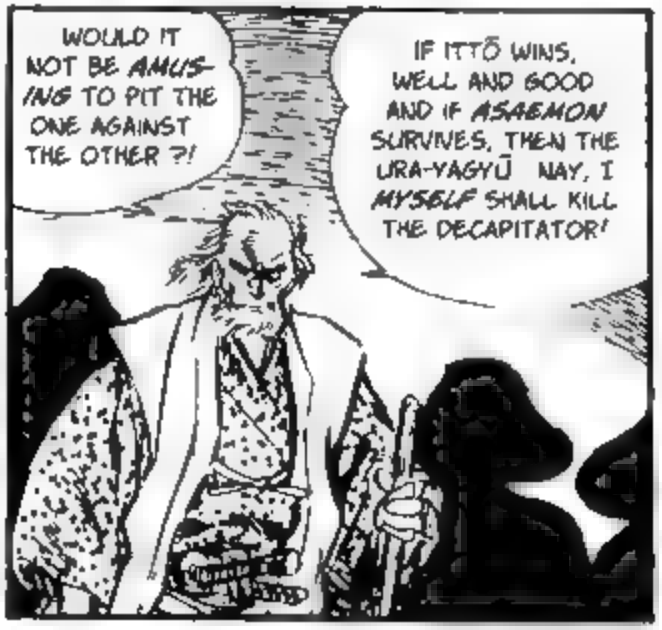


KCHK

TAKE HIM!!

HALT!!

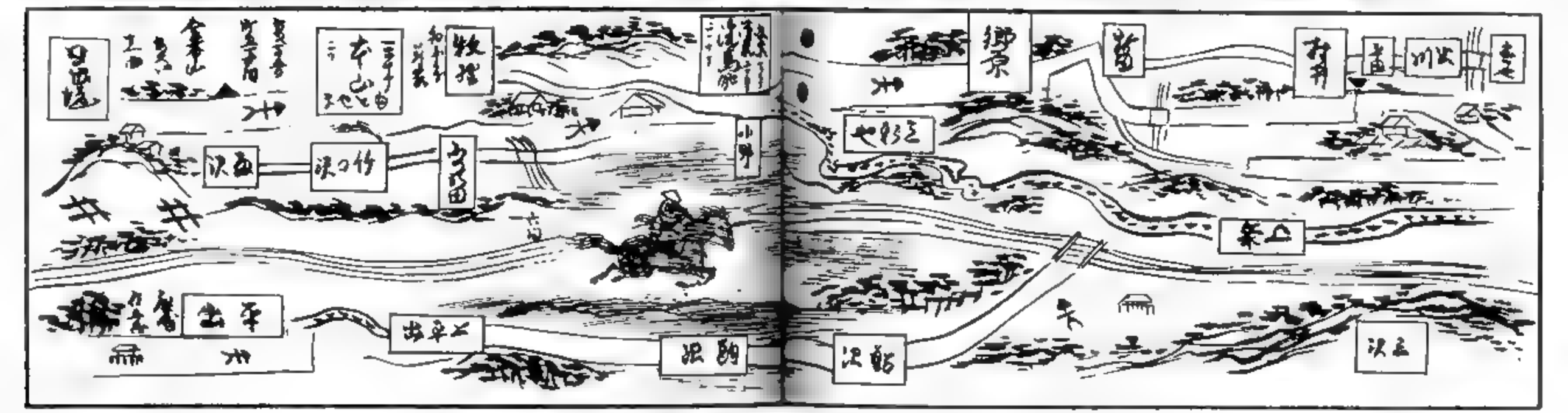
ASAEMON THE DECAPITATOR IS A *MASTER* OF *SUEMONO-GIRI!!* I'VE *UNDERESTIMATED* THAT SWORD—HE'S THE EQUAL OF ŌGAMI ITTŌ HIMSELF!

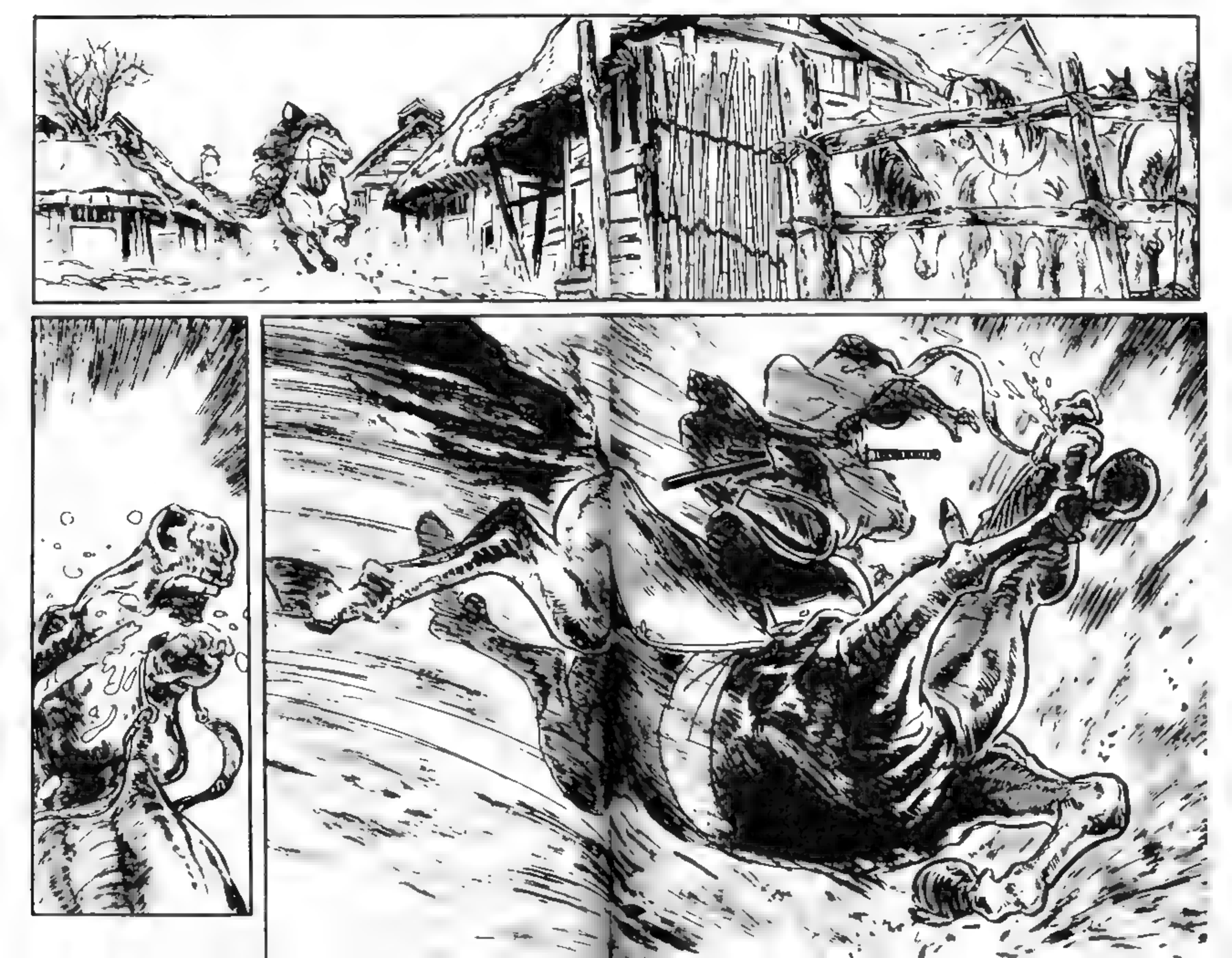

WOULD IT NOT BE *AMUSING* TO PIT THE ONE AGAINST THE OTHER ?!
IF ITTŌ WINS, WELL AND GOOD AND IF *ASAEMON* SURVIVES, THEN THE URA-YAGYŪ NAY, I *MYSELF* SHALL KILL THE DECAPITATOR!

*WOLF* AND *EAGLE* BATTLE, AND THE *HUNTER* TAKES THE WEAKENED *VICTOR!* IS THIS NOT PERFECT?!
MIZUNO! KANŌ! WAKADOSHIYORI *UPSTARTS!* YOU CANNOT TOUCH ME!

THOKKA
THOKKA

KTHOK
KTHOK





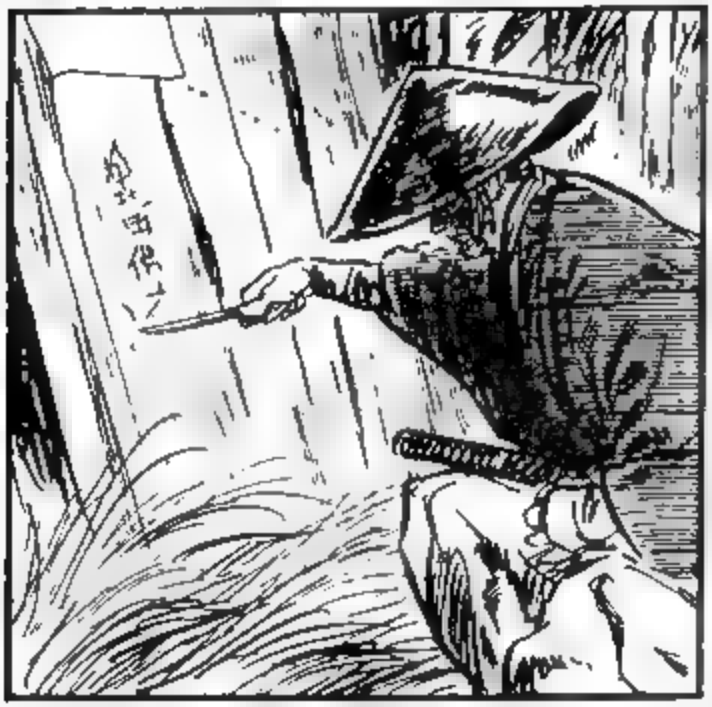
SCURRY

"WATCH THE TEMPLE GATES FOR THE VOTIVE TALISMANS OF MEIFUMADŌ, THE HORSE- AND OX-HEADED DEMONS OF HELL!

"THUS IT IS SAID ITTŌ FINDS HIS CLIENTS!"

KLAK KLAK

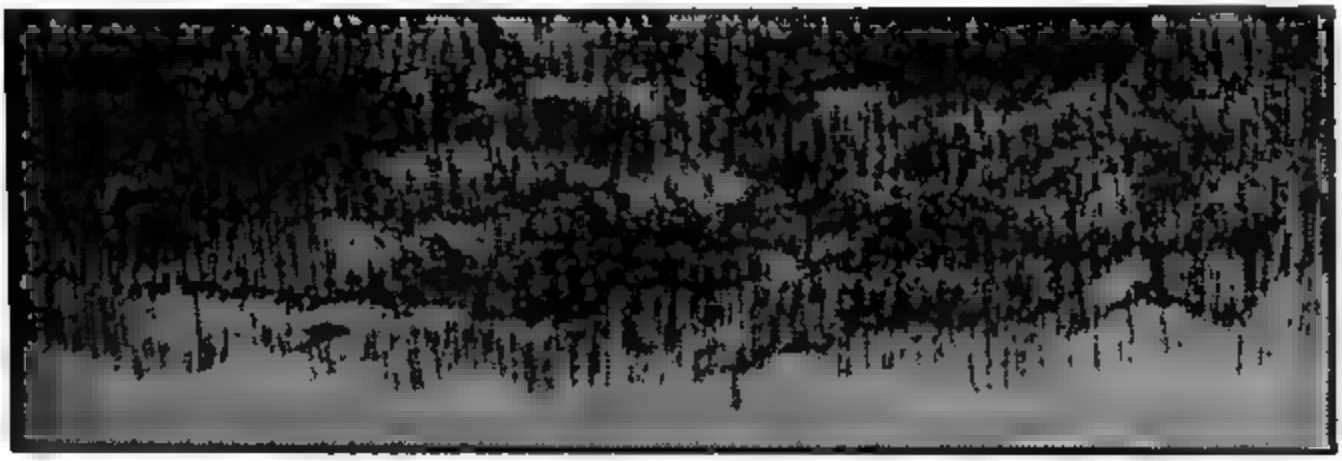
THE TALISMAN OF *MEIFUMADŌ!*

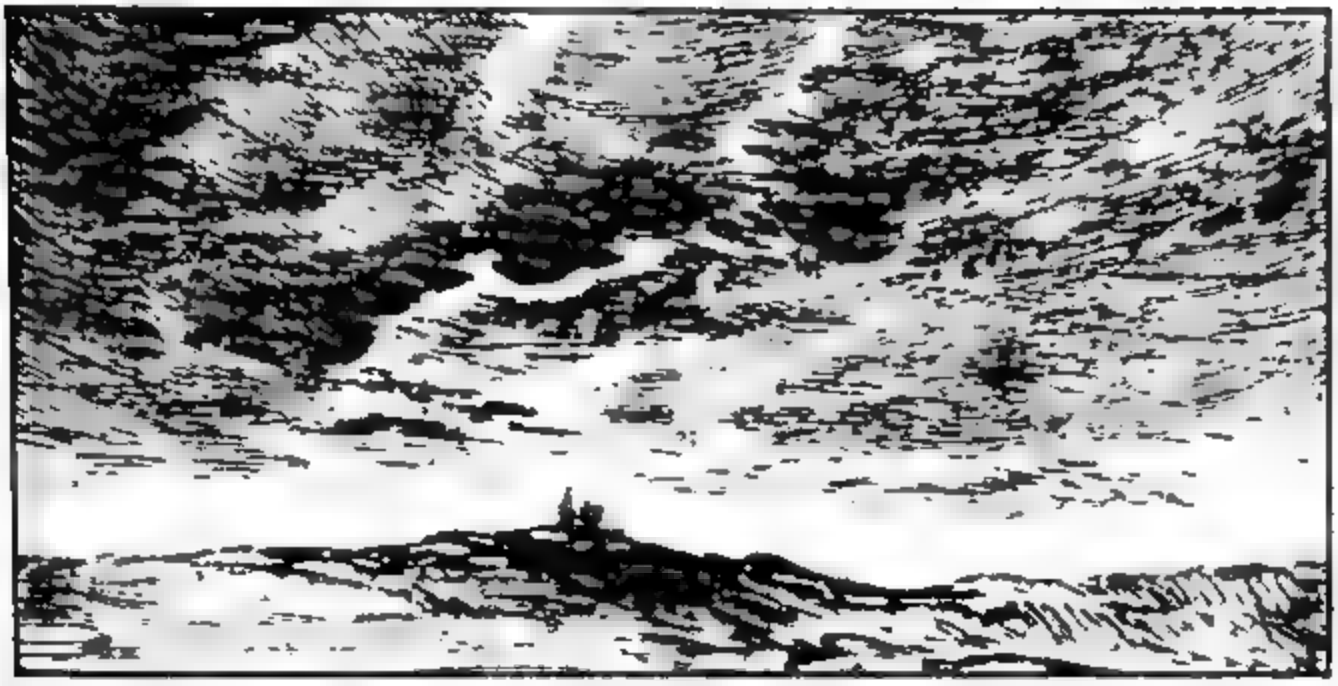


*NORTH FIELD. BUDDHAS. DEATH.

KSSSHH

WHSSSSSHH

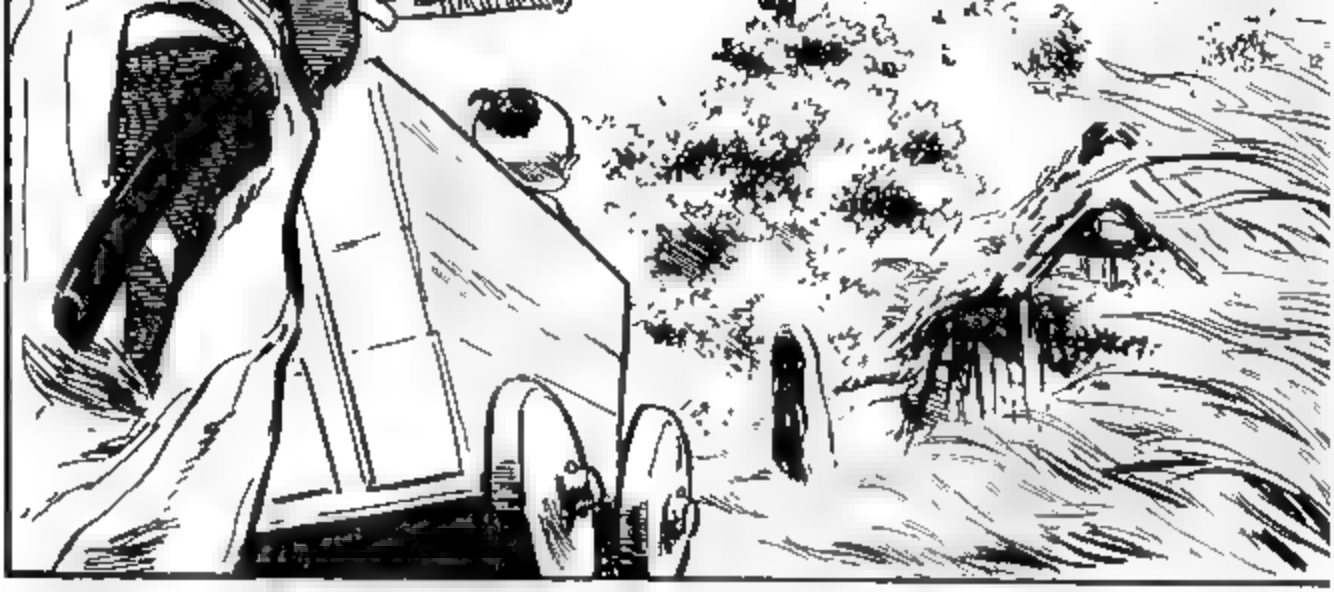


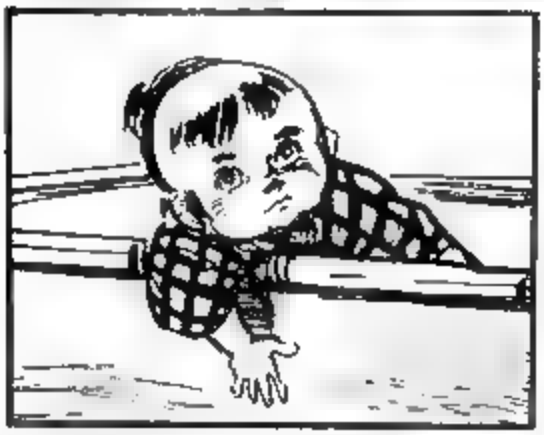


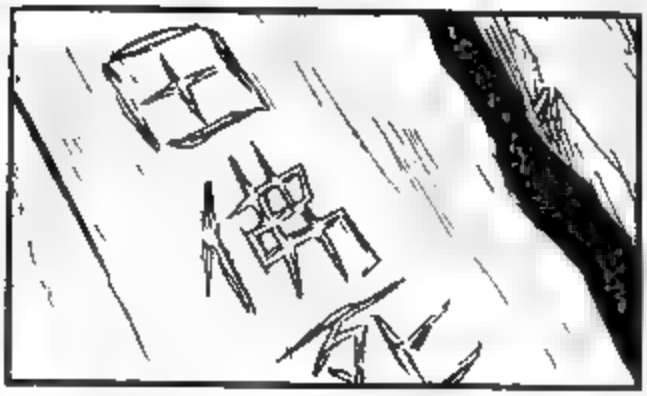
GARA
GARA
GARA

GARA
GARA

GARA
GARA
GARA





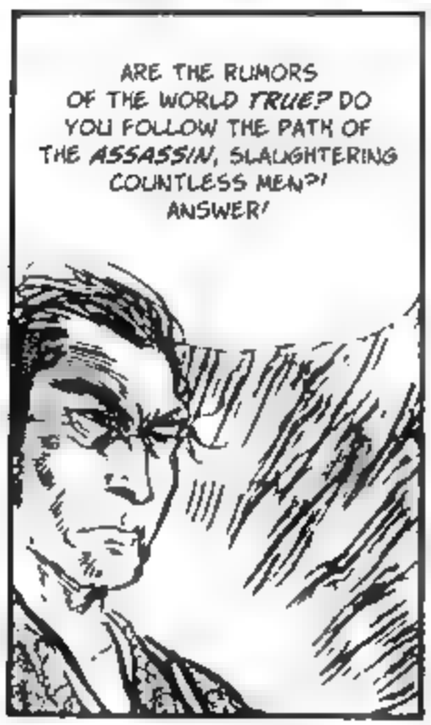


DUE NORTH, BUDDHAS. *KUYŌ-GA-HARA*, THE FIELD OF PRAYERS!

YAMADA ASAEMON! O-TAMESHI! FOR THE SHŌGUN!

ŌGAMI ITTŌ!

FOLLOWING THE COMMAND OF THE WAKADOSHIYORI LORDS, KANŌ TŌTŌMI-NO-KAMI AND MIZUNO BUNGO-NO-KAMI, I COME ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS OF THE SHŌGUNATE!
. . . .
. . . .


ARE THE RUMORS OF THE WORLD TRUE? DO YOU FOLLOW THE PATH OF THE ASSASSIN, SLAUGHTERING COUNTLESS MEN?! ANSWER!

IF YOU HAVE SEEN THE TALISMANS OF MEIFUMADŌ, AND LAID DŌCHŪJIN TRAIL MARKERS TO GUIDE AN ASSASSIN TO THIS PLACE, HAVE YOU NEED TO ASK?
THEN.

WHY DO YOU WALK THE ASSASSIN'S ROAD?!

TO AVENGE THE ŌGAMI CLAN!

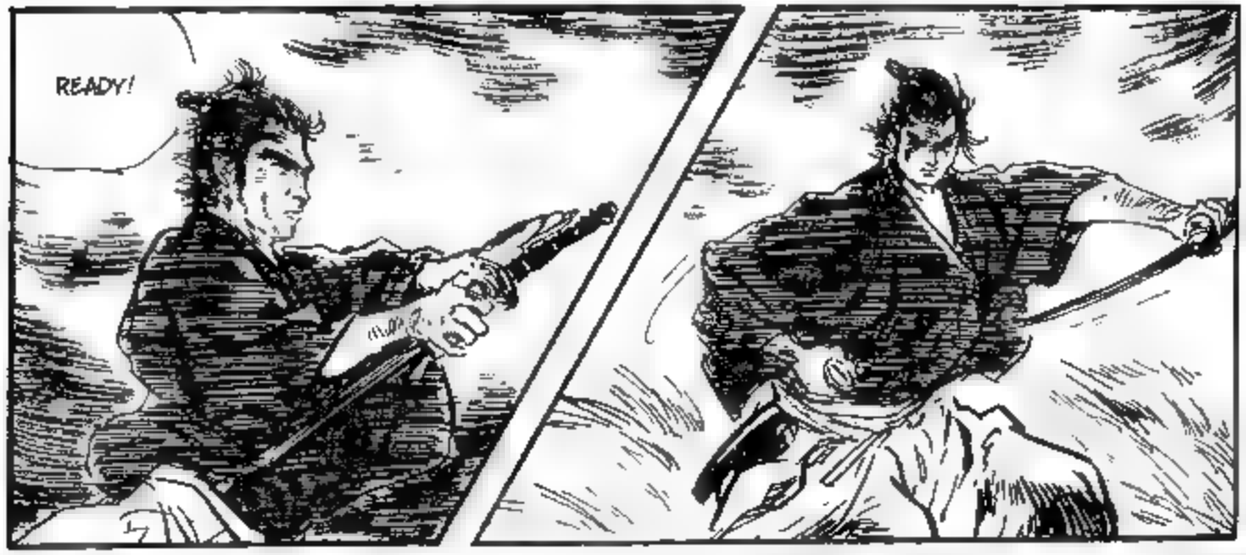
THE URA-YAGYŪ ARE THE SHŌGUN'S ASSASSINS—I CANNOT HAVE MY VENGEANCE UNLESS I WALK THAT SAME ASSASSIN'S ROAD!

VERY WELL!

BY THE WILL OF THE GŌ-RŌJU SENIOR COUNCILORS, I MUST TAKE YOUR HONORABLE LIFE.
PREPARE FOR DEATH!

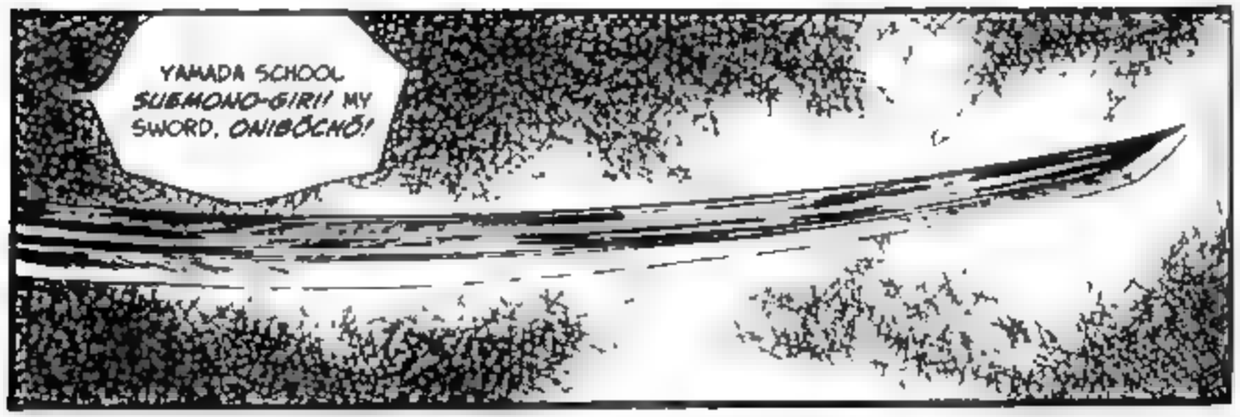
AS ONE DECAPITATOR TO ANOTHER, I PROPOSE A SUEMONO-TAMESHI DUEL. DO YOU ACCEPT?

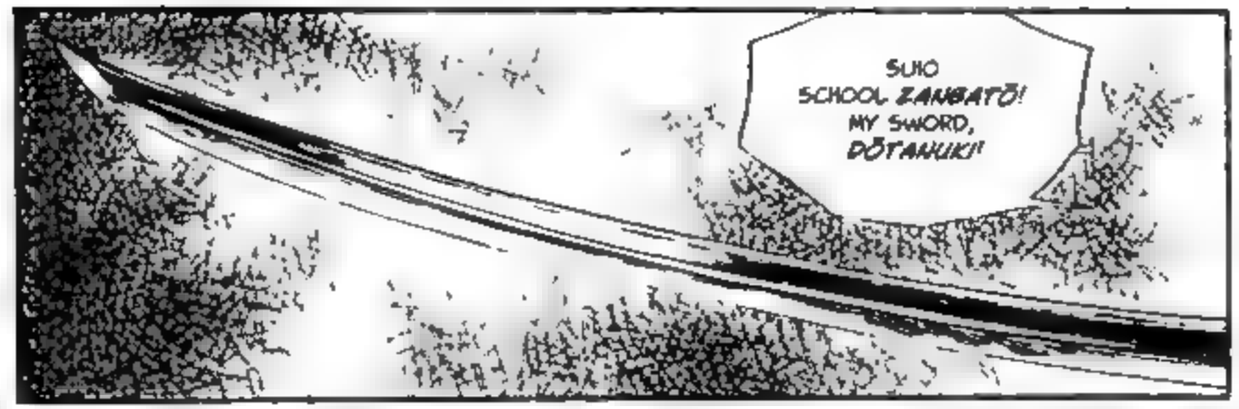
I DO!

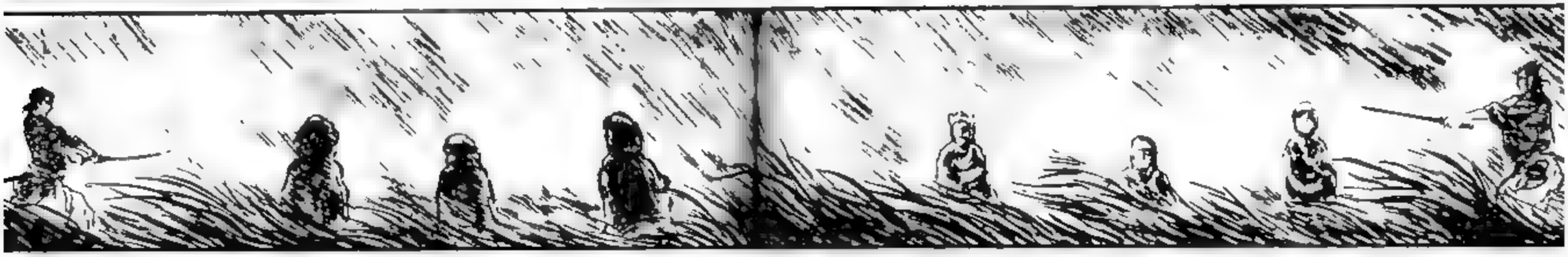

READY!

THREE BUDDHAS BY O-TAMESHI, AND THEN WE DUEL!
UNDER-STOOD!

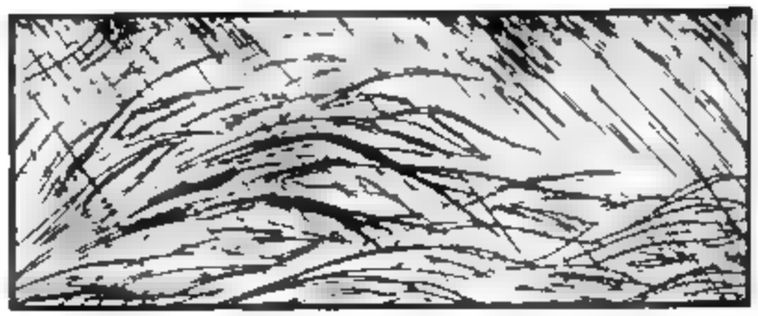
WHSSHH

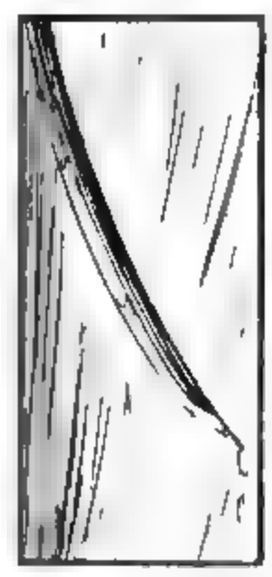

YAMADA SCHOOL SUEMONO-GIRI!! MY SWORD, ONIBŌCHŌ!


SUIO SCHOOL ZANBATŌ! MY SWORD, DŌTANUKI!!



KSSSHH





READY?!

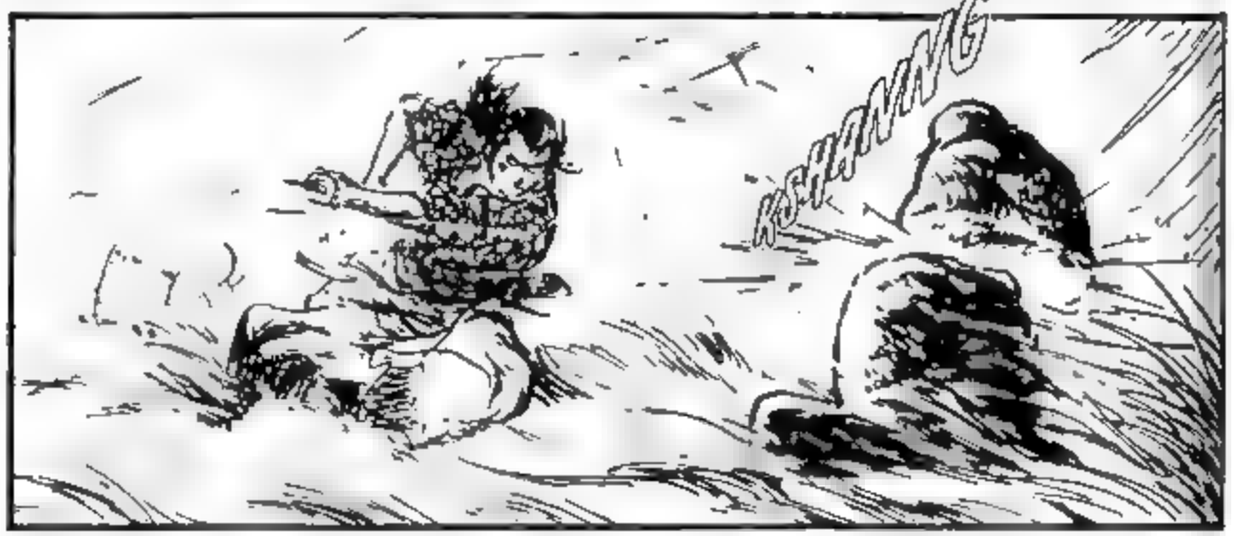
MM!

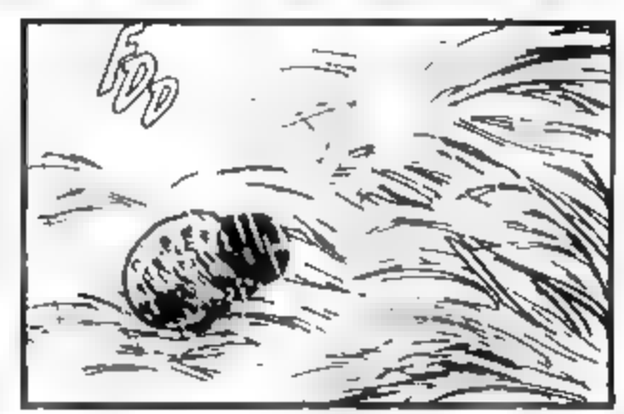
FDD
SHHK

SKSSH
SKSSH

SHINNNG

KRANNG
KTANNG


KSHINNNG


FDD


SKSSHHH


SKSSHH

TWISST

ONIBŌCHŌ... BROKEN...!
FWOO
KANG
?!
AN IRON COLLAR?!
HRRN!! THE URA-YAGYŪ!

THEY MUST HAVE *ANTICIPATED* IT WOULD BE AN *O-TAMESHI* DUEL, AND PUT COLLARS ON THE STATUES.
TO KILL *ME* ? OR ELSE

HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THIS COLLAR, IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ME WHO FELL HERE TODAY. WAS IT THE YAGYU'S SCHEMES THAT SAVED ME, OR THE DEMONS OF *MEIFUMADŌ* ?

THIS MUCK IS CLEAR! THE YAGYŪ ARE SO DESPERATE THEY'LL STOOP TO *ANYTHING* TO DEFEAT ME!
*NISEN BYAKUDO* —THE WHITE WAY BETWEEN THE TWO RIVERS! IS OUR VENGEANCE AT HAND?!

YAMADA ASAEMON YOSHITSUGU DIED THE SEVENTH YEAR OF *MEIWA*, 1770 OFFICIAL "CAUSE OF DEATH" SUDDEN ILLNESS.

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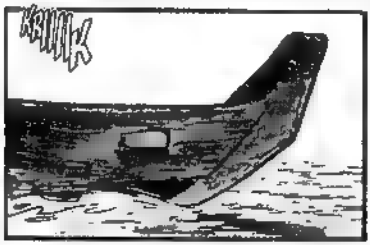
Scanner: Mavi

the twenty-eighth

# The Guns of Sakai


KRIIIK

KRIIK
KRIIK

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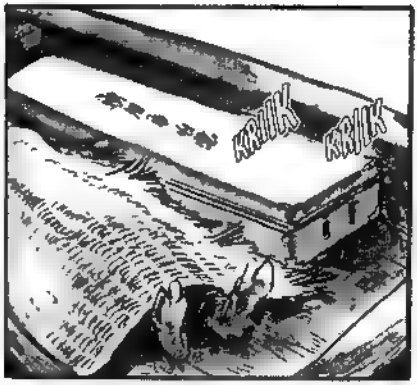
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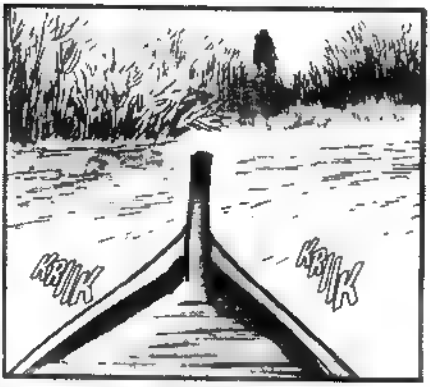
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SSSSH

INOUE GEKI COMMANDER OF THE ŌSAKA CASTLE GUARDS RIFLE DETACHMENT
ŌGAMI ITTŌ

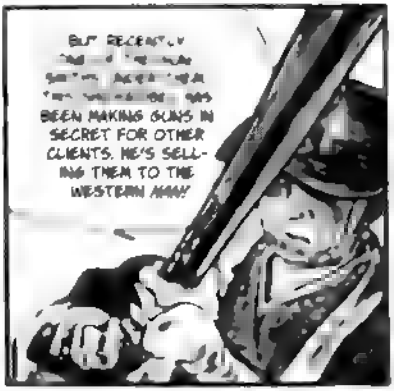
THERE'S A GUN SMITH IN SEINSHŪ SAKAI NAMED SHICHIRŌBEI HE MUST BE

HERE'S YOUR FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ

TELL ME WHY
CONDITION
I KNEW DAMN WELL I'D HAVE TO TELL EVERY

I'LL HEAR IT BRIEF

THIS IS A BREAK-BUTTON
THE FIVE GUNSMITHS OF


BUT RECENTLY
BEEN MAKING GUNS IN SECRET FOR OTHER CLIENTS. HE'S SELLING THEM TO THE WESTERN MAN!

WE HAVE AN INFORMANT.

ahem!

WE SENT UNDER-COVER INVESTIGATORS ATTACHED TO THE ŌSAKA CASTLE *JŌDAI* TO INVESTIGATE, BUT...

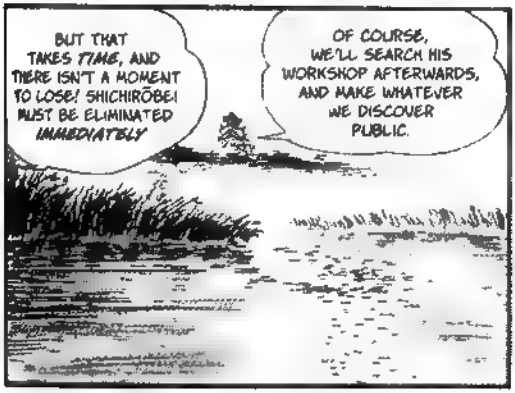
*THIS* IS THE LAST MAN WE SENT IN—THE *THIRD*

HIS BODY WASHED UP ON THE BANK OF THE OYODO RIVER LAST NIGHT. LOOK CLOSELY!! HE WAS HIT SIMULTANEOUSLY BY A SCORE OR MORE THREE-*MONME* LEAD BULLETS!

SO IT SEEMS SHICHIRŌBEI ISN'T MAKING NORMAL *SAKAIZUTSU*. HE'S BEEN WORKING IN SECRET TO PERFECT SOME KIND OF DEADLY *MULTIPLE-FIRE WEAPON*

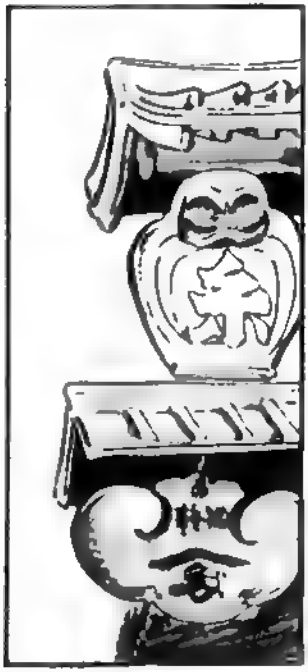
IF THESE NEW GUNS REACH THE ARMORIES OF THE WESTERN *HAN* IN LARGE NUMBERS, IT COULD THREATEN THE SHŌGUNATE ITSELF!

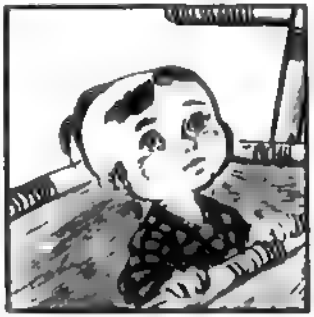
WE NEED THE PERMISSION OF THE *TEPPŌ BUGYŌ* COMMISSIONER OF FIREARMS IN EDO TO PROSECUTE A SHŌGUNATE GUNSMITH.

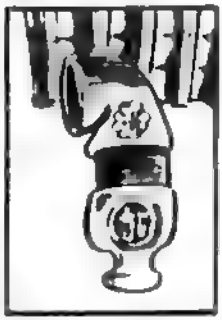

BUT THAT TAKES *TIME*, AND THERE ISN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE! SHICHIRŌBEI MUST BE ELIMINATED *IMMEDIATELY*!
OF COURSE, WE'LL SEARCH HIS WORKSHOP AFTERWARDS, AND MAKE WHATEVER WE DISCOVER PUBLIC.

I *IMPLORE* YOU TO TAKE THE JOB!
I SEE YOU'VE THOUGHT IT THROUGH!

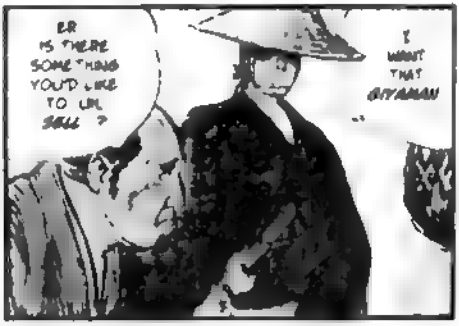
WH- WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?
YOU SEND ME INTO A HAIL OF BULLETS PITTING ME AGAINST SHICHIRŌBEI.
THAT WAY YOU CAN SEE WHAT HE'S BEEN MAKING, SEIZE IT, AND TAKE CREDIT FOR IT YOURSELF!
B- BUT I DIDN'T
WITH ENOUGH MEAL YOU COULD SEARCH HIS WORKSHOP AND BRING THIS TO LIGHT WITHOUT ME.
BUT .BUT HE'S CERTAIN TO USE HIS DEADLY NEW WEAPON! OUR CASUALTIES WOULD BE IMMENSE!
THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU!! DO YOU REFUSE?!
NO. I'LL DO IT.
Y-YOU CAN TAKE AS MANY SAKAITZUTSU AS YOU NEED!
I NEED NOTHING!







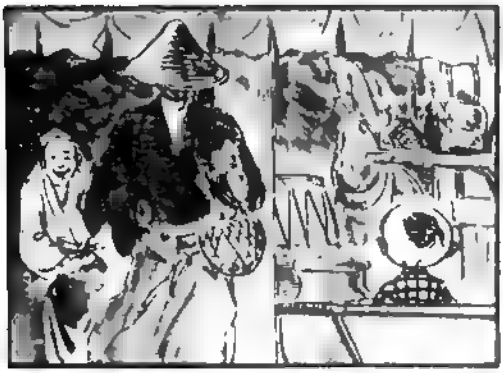
MY WELL-

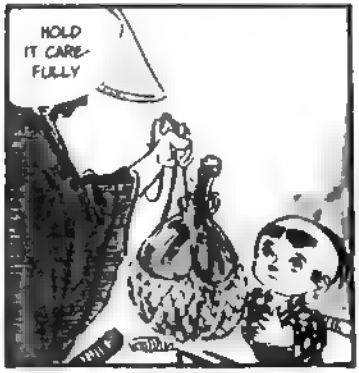

ER IS THERE SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO UH, SELL ?
I WANT THAT GIYAMAN

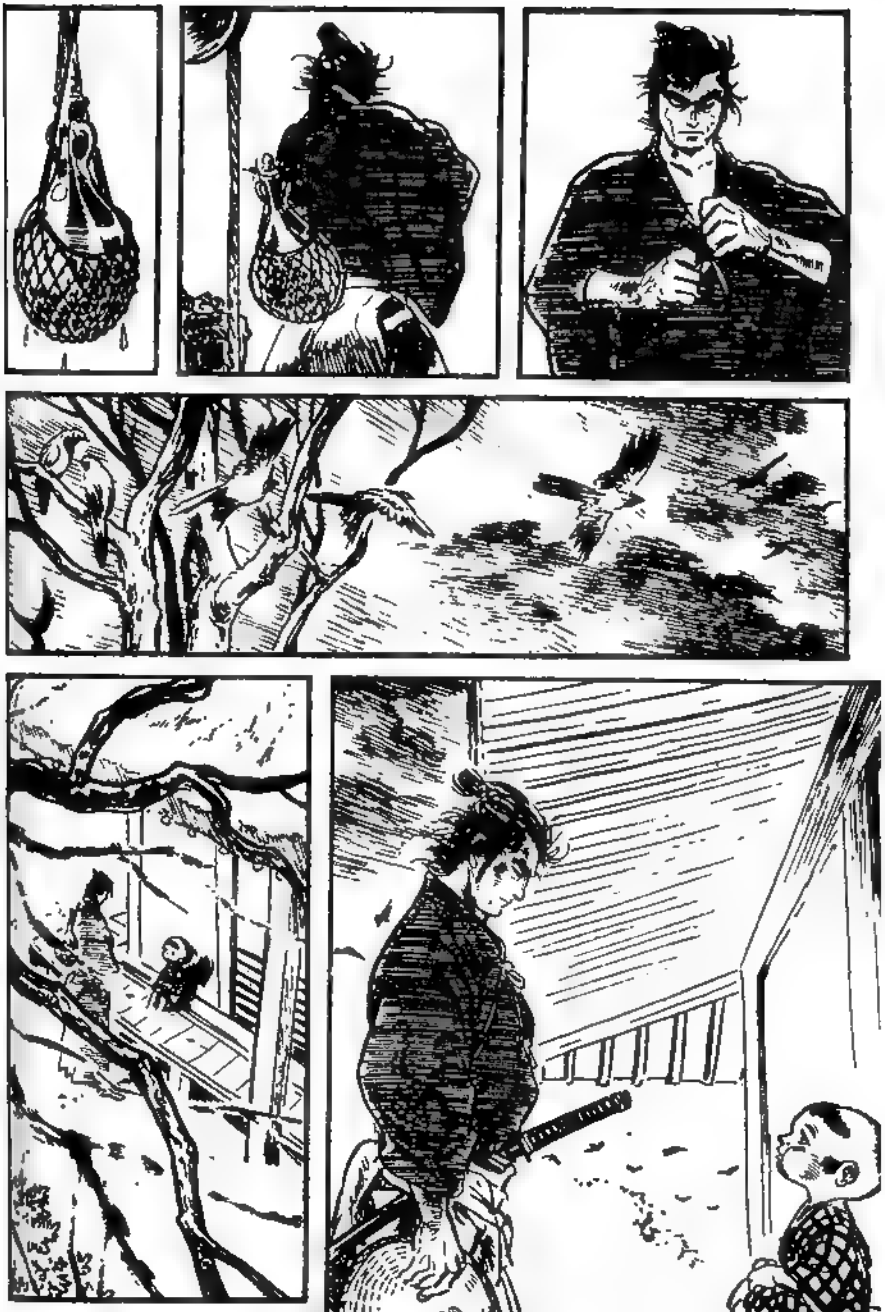
PARDON ? TH THIS ? FOR YOU ?!
YES

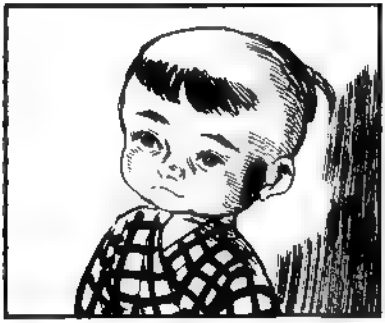
NOW THIS THIS IS A MASTER PIECE
NOT LIKE THOSE CHEAP IMITATIONS YOU'LL FIND IN OTHER STORES

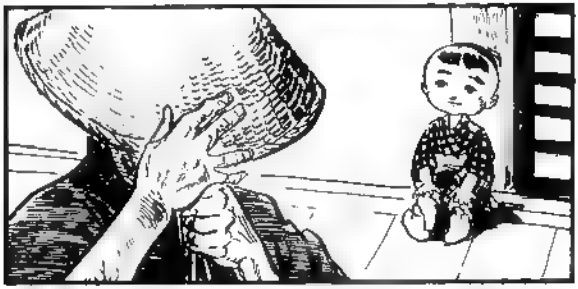
NO SIR, THIS IS THE FINEST GIYAMAN IN ALL SAKAI ONE OF A KIND!

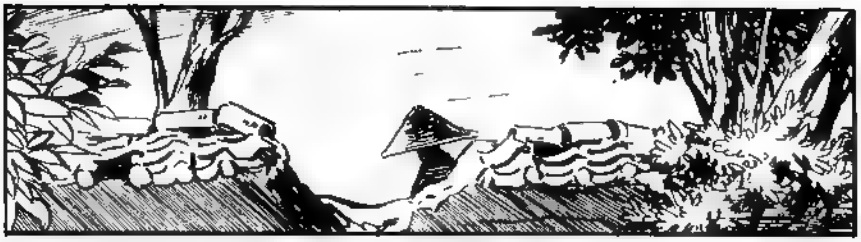


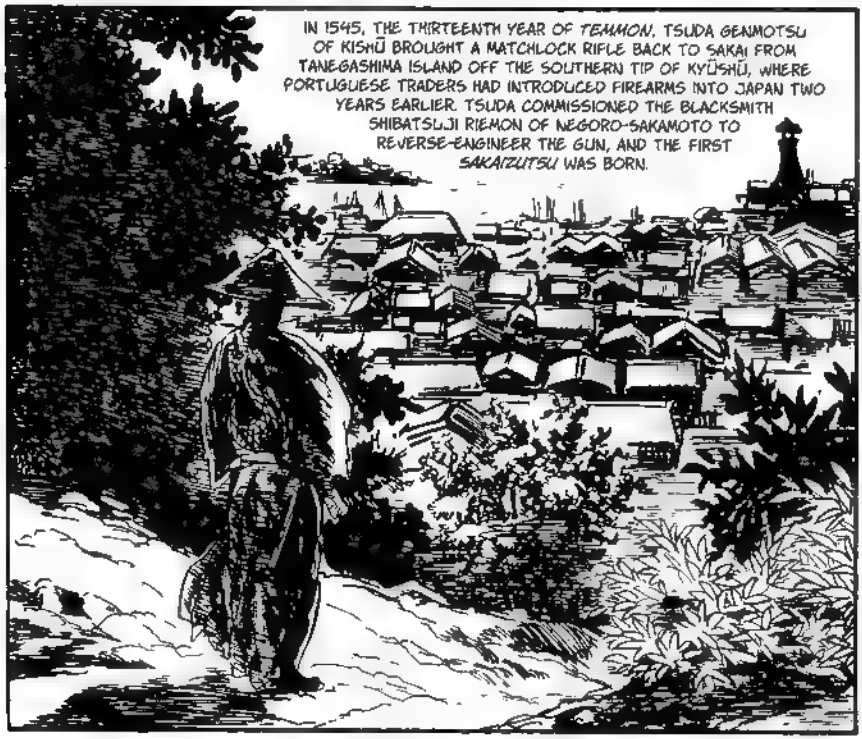

HOLD
IT CARE-
FULLY



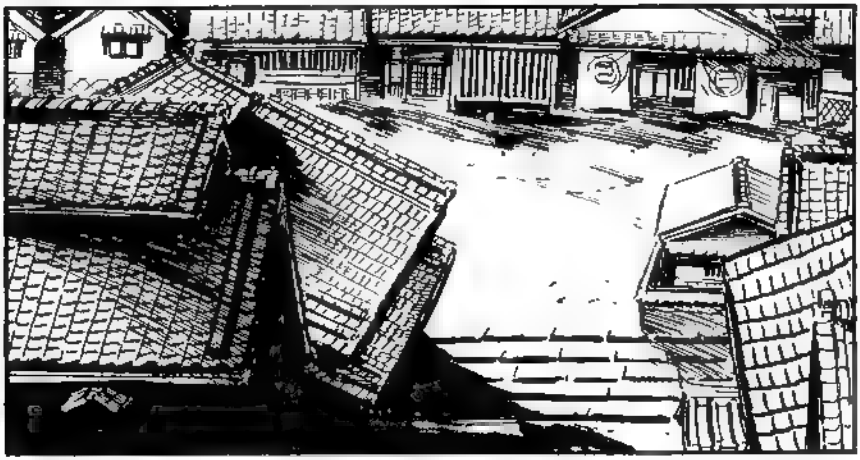




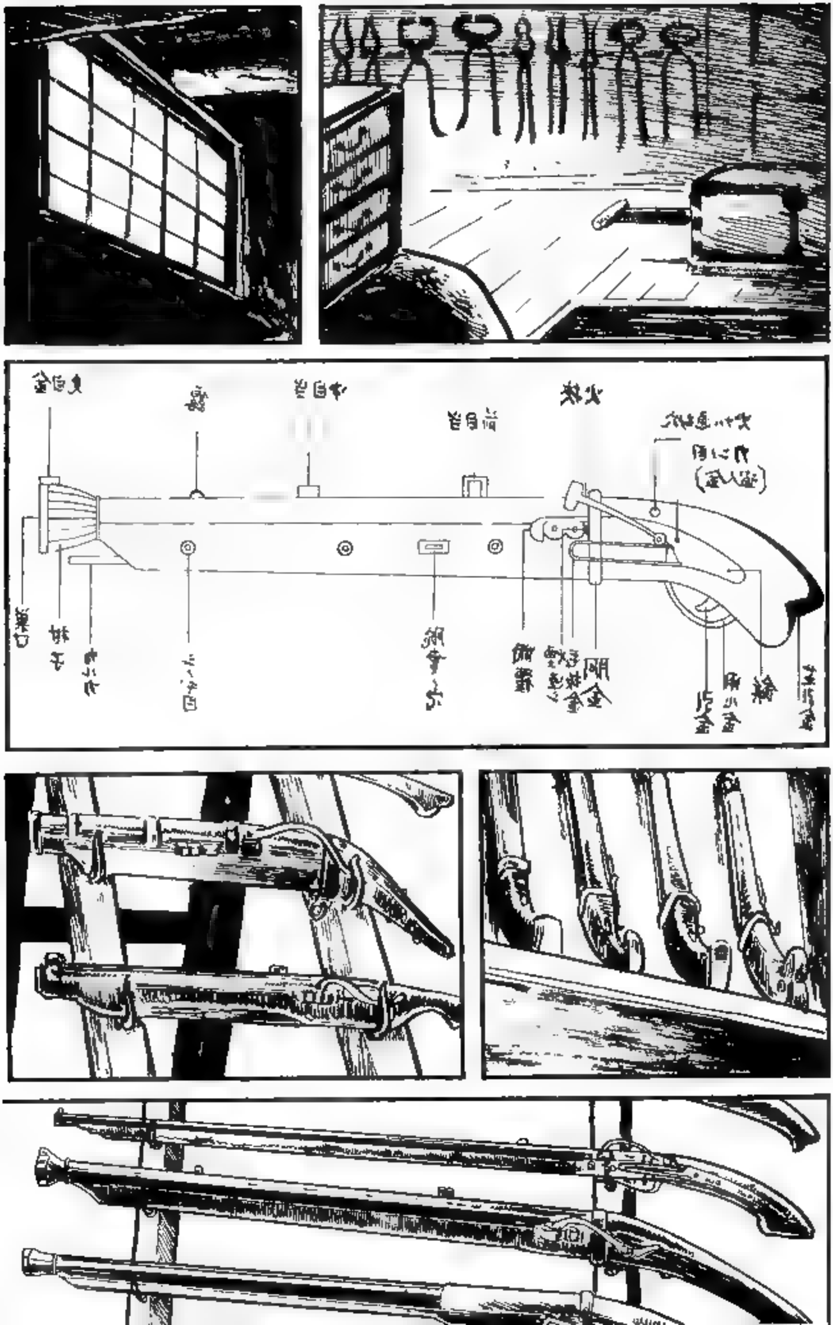


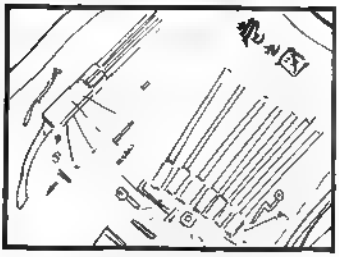

IN 1545, THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF *TENMON*, TSUDA GENMOTSU OF KISHŪ BROUGHT A MATCHLOCK RIFLE BACK TO SAKAI FROM TANEGASHIMA ISLAND OFF THE SOUTHERN TIP OF KYŪSHŪ, WHERE PORTUGUESE TRADERS HAD INTRODUCED FIREARMS INTO JAPAN TWO YEARS EARLIER. TSUDA COMMISSIONED THE BLACKSMITH SHIBATSUJI RIEMON OF NEGORO-SAKAMOTO TO REVERSE-ENGINEER THE GUN, AND THE FIRST *SAKAIZUTSU* WAS BORN.

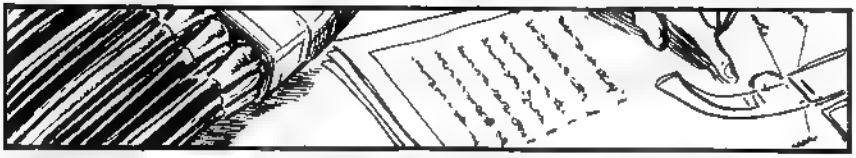
THE SHŌGUNATE DESIGNATED THE SHIBATSUJI FAMILY ITS OFFICIAL GUNSMITH, WITH AN EXCLUSIVE CONTRACT TO PROVIDE IT WITH FIREARMS.

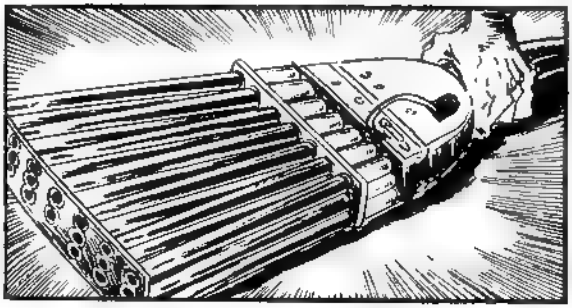


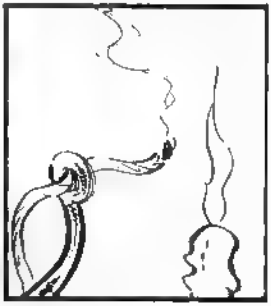
SHICHIRŌBEI WAS A GUNSMITH WORKING FOR SHIBATSUJI, A MAN SO OBSESSED WITH HIS CRAFT THAT HE REFUSED TO SPEAK OF ANYTHING ELSE. HIS COLLEAGUES DERISIVELY NICKNAMED HIM *SILENT SHICHIRŌBEI*.


先目金
中目当
前目当
火挟
巣口

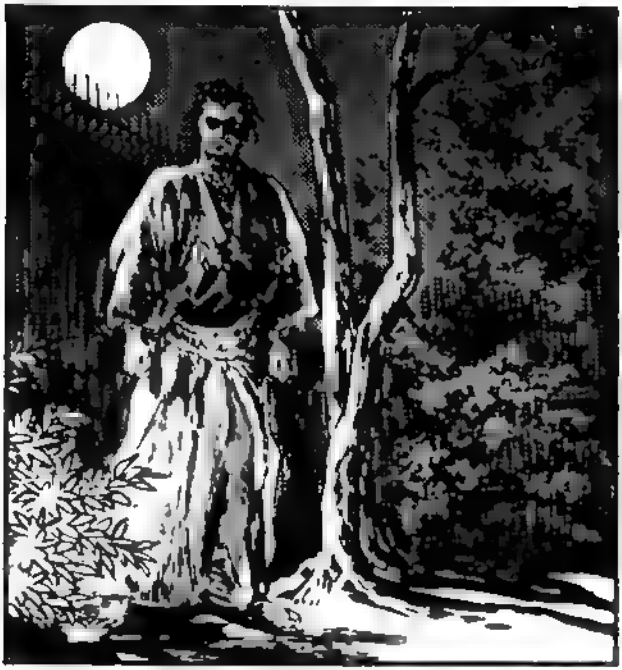




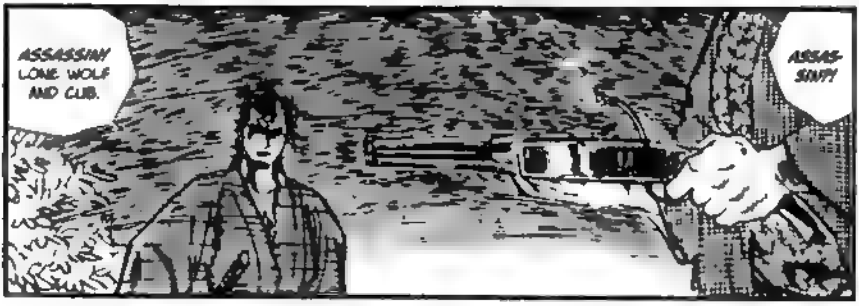


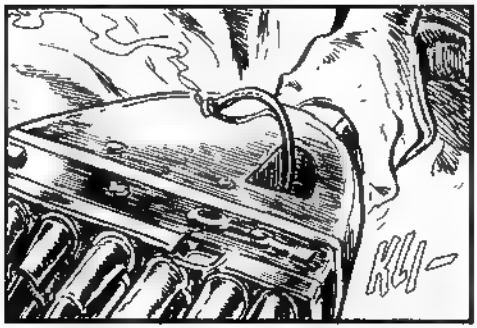


KSHAKK
RAW!

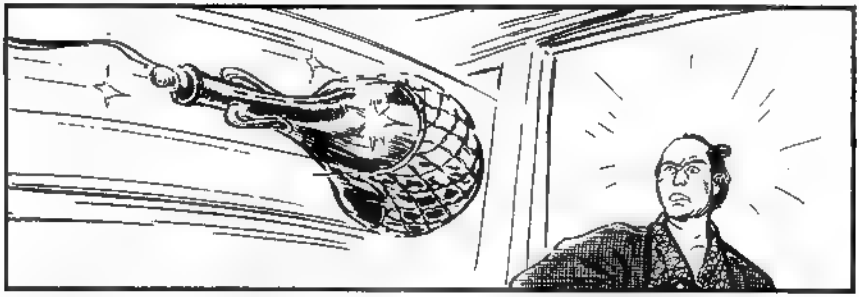


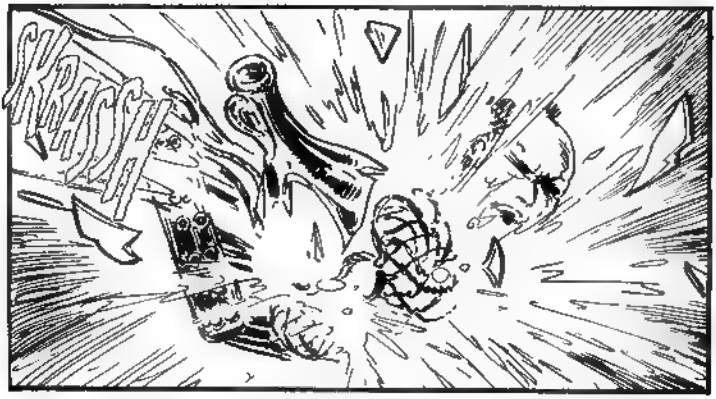
WHO ARE YOU?!


ASSASSIN! LONE WOLF AND CUB.
ASSAS-SIN?!


KU-

WHSSH




KRASH

FZZK

A WATER-FILLED GIYAMAN TO EXTINGUISH MY FUSE! BRILLIANT! YET THE MINUTE YOU KILL ME, YOU DIE!

WHAT WILL YOU DO?!

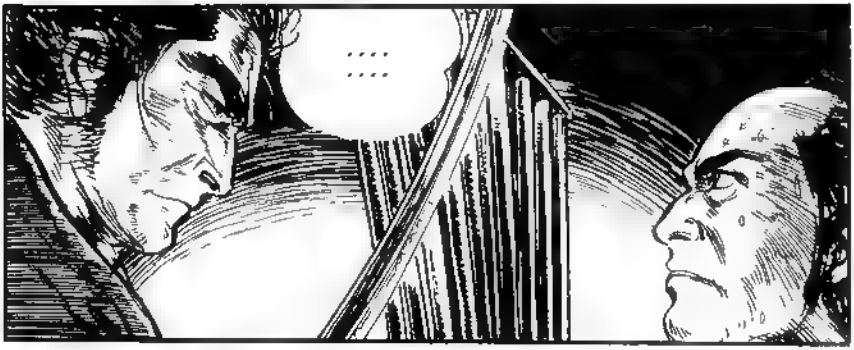
....
....

LIFE, DEATH. BOTH ARE MEANINGLESS TO AN ASSASSIN OF MEIFUMADŌ THERE IS ONLY DEATH TO HIS TARGET!
NO!

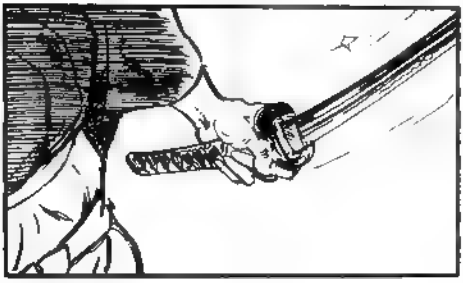
LOWER YOUR GUNS! IT'S HOPELESS!

WILL YOU GRANT ME TIME TO SPEAK TO MY APPRENTICES?

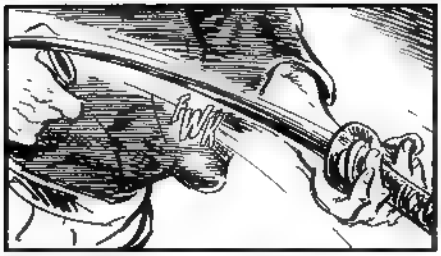
AS YOU FOLLOW THE WAY OF THE ASSASSIN, I HAVE GIVEN MY LIFE TO THE WAY OF THE GUN!
IF IT IS TIME FOR ME TO DIE, AT LEAST LET ME PASS ON MY SECRETS TO THE NEXT GENERATION!

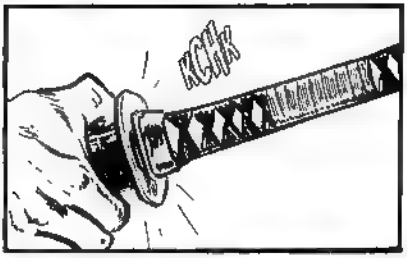

....
....

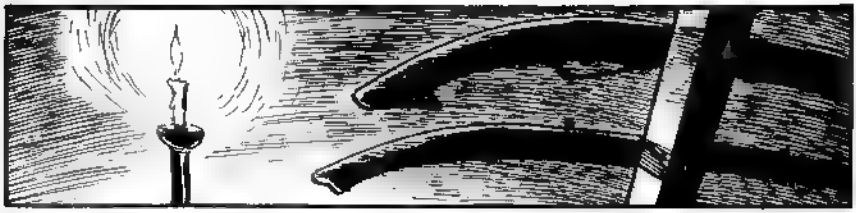
THE QUEST OF THE GUN...



VERY WELL. STAY WITHIN REACH OF MY SWORD
MY THANKS.


IWK

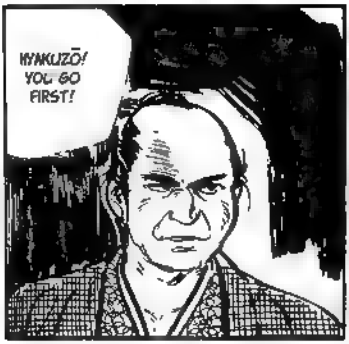

KCIK

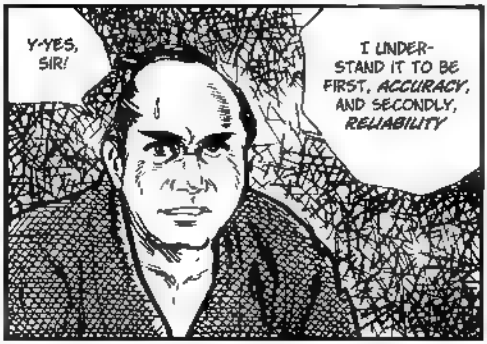


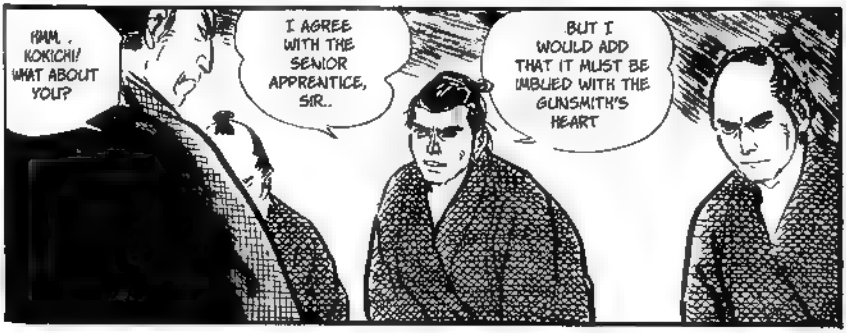
HYAKUZŌ! KOKICHI! ENTARŌ!
SIR!

A QUESTION FOR YOU ALL. WHAT IS THE VERY *SOUL* OF A GUN?

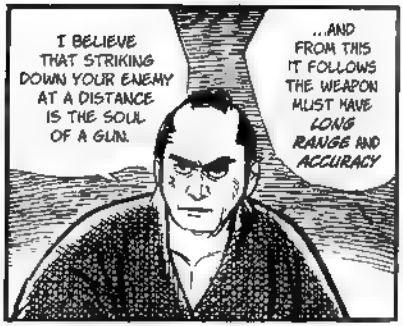
.....!


MYAKUZŌ! YOU GO FIRST!


Y-YES, SIR!
I UNDERSTAND IT TO BE FIRST, *ACCURACY*, AND SECONDLY, *RELIABILITY*


HMM. KOKICHI! WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I AGREE WITH THE SENIOR APPRENTICE, SIR..
BUT I WOULD ADD THAT IT MUST BE IMBUED WITH THE GUNSMITH'S HEART

GUNTARŌ!
SIR!

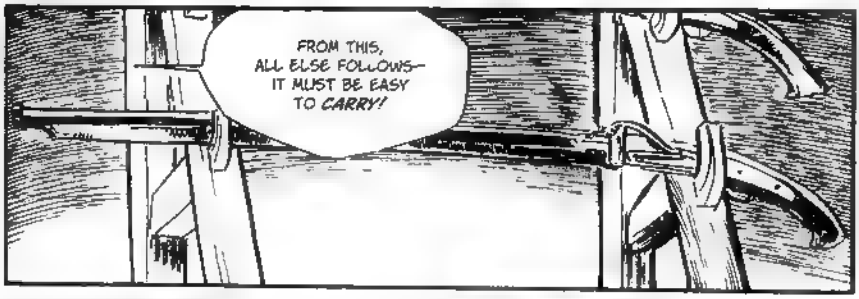

I BELIEVE THAT STRIKING DOWN YOUR ENEMY AT A DISTANCE IS THE SOUL OF A GUN.
...AND FROM THIS IT FOLLOWS THE WEAPON MUST HAVE LONG RANGE AND ACCURACY

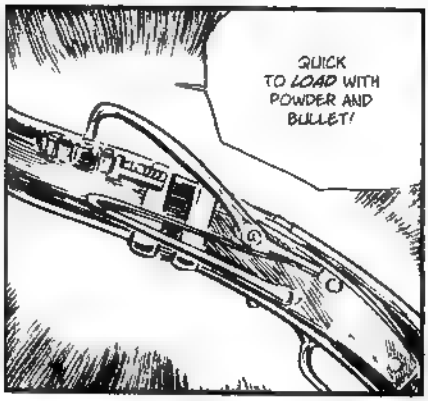
MM. .TOO SHORT FOR A KIMONO'S OBI, TOO LONG TO SIMPLY TIE BACK THE SLEEVES. .YOUR ANSWERS ARE BOTH RIGHT AND WRONG!

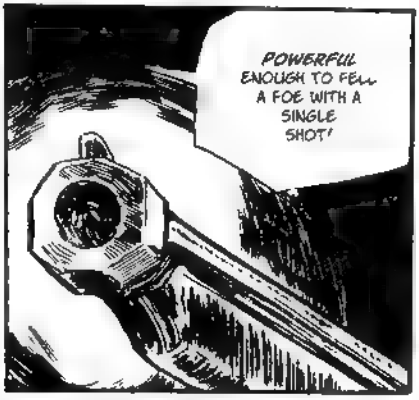
LISTEN!!

A FIREARM IS A TOOL FOR KILLING!
IT HAS NO OTHER PURPOSE!

THIS BEING SO, THERE IS ONLY *ONE* CONCERN—HOW TO KILL THE *MOST* PEOPLE *MOST* EFFICIENTLY!


FROM THIS, ALL ELSE FOLLOWS—IT MUST BE EASY TO *CARRY!*


QUICK TO *LOAD* WITH POWDER AND BULLET!


*POWERFUL* ENOUGH TO FELL A FOE WITH A SINGLE SHOT!

OF *COURSE*, RANGE! OF *COURSE*, ACCURACY! YET IN THE FACE OF *TEN* ENEMIES, EVEN THE MOST *POWERFUL* AND *ACCURATE* MUSKET IS *HELPLESS*.

A GUN THAT CAN KILL TEN ENEMIES OR MORE AT *ONE TIME!* THAT IS THE *HOLY GRAIL* FOR ANY *TRUE* GUNSMITH!

*LISTEN WELL!* THE ERA OF WARFARE BETWEEN SWORD AND SPEAR IS *OVER!* IN THIS NEW AGE, THE NUMBER AND QUALITY OF *GUNS* WILL DECIDE THE OUTCOME! HOW CAN WE BUILD WEAPONS MORE *POWERFUL* THAN THOSE OF OUR ENEMY?! WITHOUT THAT *DRIVE* WITHOUT *CEASELESS EXPERIMENTATION*, YOU CAN *NEVER* BE A MASTER GUNSMITH!

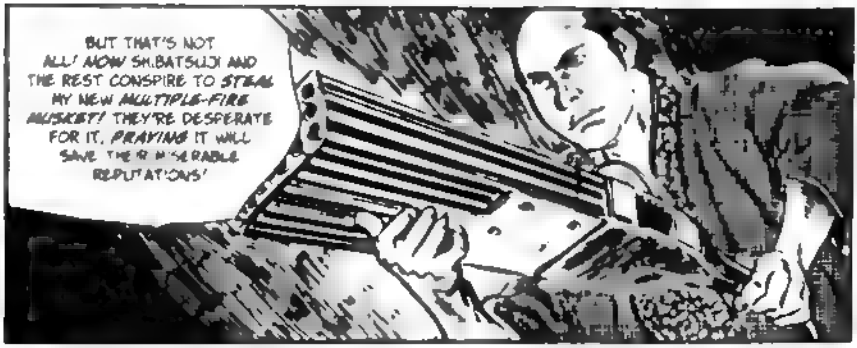
YET WHAT DO WE SEE?!

BE IT OUR LEADER SHIBATSUJI RIEMON, OR HIS COUSIN CHŌZAEMON! EMOKIYA KANZAEMON, OR KYŪBHEI! KANSHICHI! THE FIVE GUNSMITHS, THE SUPPOSED MASTERS OF *SAKAIZUTSU*, HAVE *FORGOTTEN* THIS TRUTH, AND LEARNED ONLY *PRIDE*.

UNABLE TO CREATE NEW AND MORE POWERFUL *WEAPONS*, THEY TRY TO SAVE FACE WITH POINTLESS *DECORATIONS! GOLD TRIM* ON A GUN?! *IVORY* INLAYS?! *FOOLS ALL!*

TODAY A PLAIN IRON-BOUND MUSKET COSTS ONE HUNDRED SIXTY SILVER *MOMME!* BUT A QUALITY ORNAMENTAL MUSKET, TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY IN *GOLD!*

SUCH PRICES ARE *ABSURD!* THEY'RE BASED ON *LOOKS*, NOT *KILLING POWER!* AND THE *SHŌGUNATE*, THOSE BENIGHTED IDIOTS, *SNAP* THEM UP BY THE DOZEN!


BUT THAT'S NOT ALL! NOW SHIBATSUJI AND THE REST CONSPIRE TO STEAL MY NEW MULTIPLE-FIRE MUSKET! THEY'RE DESPERATE FOR IT, PRAYING IT WILL SAVE THEIR MISERABLE REPUTATIONS!

BUT I WON'T COOPERATE! NOT WITH OUR LEADER SHIBATSUJI, OR ENOKIYA, OR ANY OF THEM! NOT UNTIL THEY CHANGE THEIR WAYS!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?!
Y YES, SIR!!

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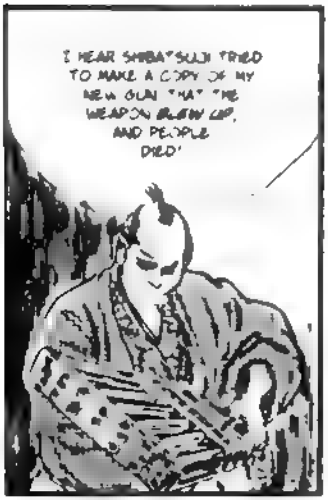
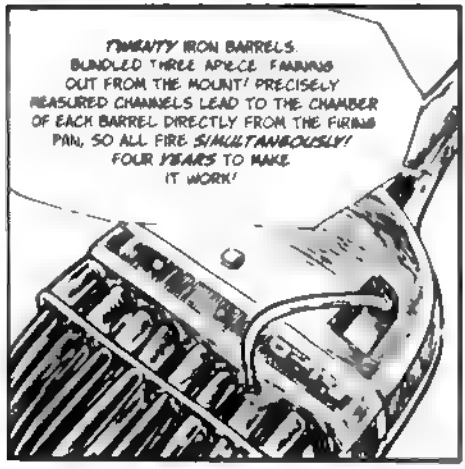

I HEAR SHIBA-SUJI TRIED TO MAKE A COPY OF MY NEW GUN THAT THE WEAPON BLEW UP, AND PEOPLE DIED!

HAH! OF COURSE HE CAN'T DO IT!
YOU CAN'T MAKE A NEW WEAPON OVERNIGHT! IT TAKES CEASELESS INNOVATION CONSTANT REFINEMENT!

I'VE DEVOTED THE LAST FOUR YEARS OF MY LIFE TO PERFECTING THIS GUN!

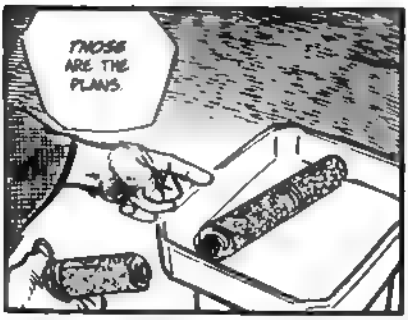

TWENTY IRON BARRELS. BUNDLED THREE APIECE FANNING OUT FROM THE MOUNT! PRECISELY MEASURED CHANNELS LEAD TO THE CHAMBER OF EACH BARREL DIRECTLY FROM THE FIRING PAN, SO ALL FIRE SIMULTANEOUSLY! FOUR YEARS TO MAKE IT WORK!

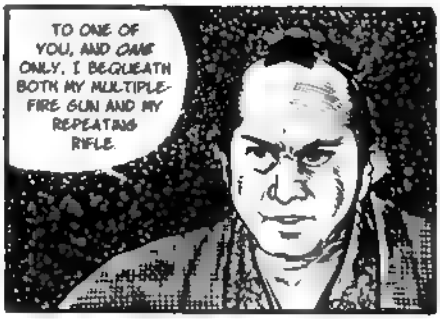
AND YET

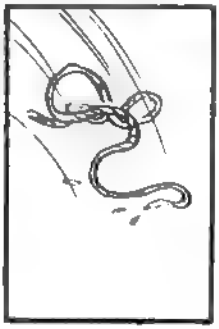
I'VE DEVISED A WAY TO MAKE MY GUN A TRUE *REPEATER*, CAPABLE OF *SUSTAINED RAPID FIRE!*

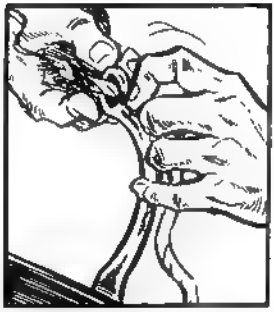
AM I *SATISFIED?* OF *COURSE* NOT! I CAN DO *BETTER!* WHEN A *TRUE* GUNSMITH COMPLETES A WEAPON, ALL HE WANTS IS TO MAKE A *BETTER* ONE! AND SO. .

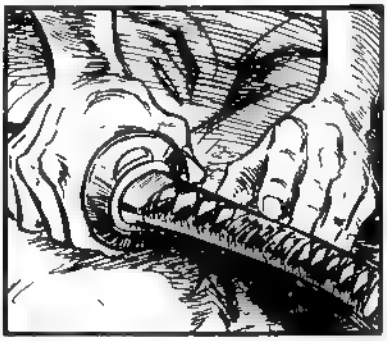
YES. IT'S DONE.
I'VE COMPLETED IT ON MY OWN, UNKNOWN TO ALL OF YOU!


THOSE ARE THE PLANS.


TO ONE OF YOU, AND ONE ONLY. I BEQUEATH BOTH MY MULTIPLE-FIRE GUN AND MY REPEATING RIFLE.







ENTARŌ! YOU'LL DO. YOUR ANSWER WAS CLOSEST TO MINE
TH-THANK YOU, SIR! THANK YOU!

NO COMPLAINTS ...?

N-NO, SIR. IT CAN'T BE HELPED..
OF COURSE WE'RE DISAPPOINTED, BUT..

YOU FOOLS!!

A REAL APPRENTICE WOULD BE STARVING FOR MY SECRETS, EVEN IF HE HAD TO KILL ME TO GET THEM!
AND YOU JUST SIT THERE AND LET SOMEONE ELSE TAKE THE PRIZE?!

YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW *WHY?!* BECAUSE ONCE *ONE* OF YOU GETS MY SECRETS.

*YOU'LL SHARE THEM!* YOU'RE IN *LEAGUE* WITH *SHIBATSUJI!!* IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACES!

YOU THINK I DIDN'T KNOW YOU'VE BEEN *PLOTTING* WITH HIM BEHIND MY *BACK?!*

IF YOU WEREN'T, HOW COULD THAT *IDIOT* FIND OUT ABOUT MY MULTIPLE-FIRE GUN AND TRY TO *COPY* IT?!

I ASKED THOSE QUESTIONS SIMPLY TO DRAW YOU OUT!

.....!

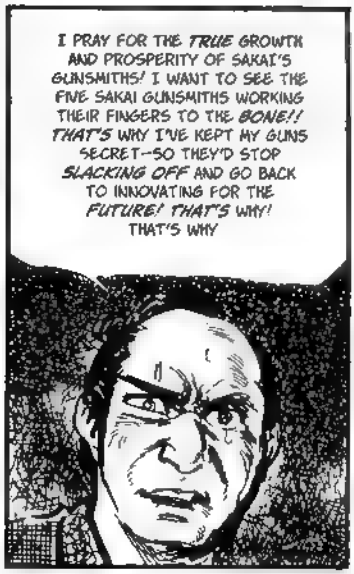
I DIDN'T *WANT* TO BELIEVE IT *COULDN'T* BELIEVE IT . BUT IT'S *TRUE*

YOU'VE *BETRAYED* ME. MY OWN *APPRENTICES!!*

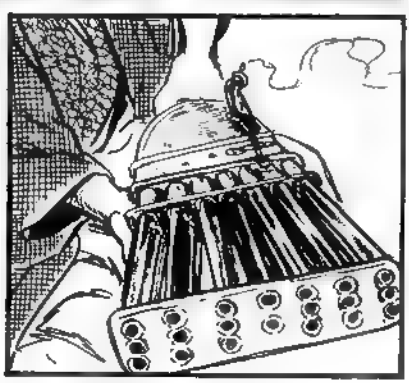
BUT BUT, SIR! ISN'T IT NECESSARY FOR US TO ALL WORK TOGETHER?
FOR THE GOOD OF ALL THE GUNSMITHS OF SAKAI, SIR!

YOU'VE BEEN MAKING YOUR INVENTIONS IN SECRET TO BOOST YOUR OWN REPUTATION.
IT'S HURTS EVERYONE'S FUTURE NOT TO SHARE THE PLANS. .

WHY YOU. .HOW DARE YOU?!
WORTHLESS TRAITORS. ALL OF YOU! MOUTHING THEIR LIES!


I PRAY FOR THE TRUE GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OF SAKAI'S GUNSMITHS! I WANT TO SEE THE FIVE SAKAI GUNSMITHS WORKING THEIR FINGERS TO THE BONE!! THAT'S WHY I'VE KEPT MY GUNS SECRET--SO THEY'D STOP SLACKING OFF AND GO BACK TO INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE! THAT'S WHY! THAT'S WHY

AND NOW YOU! MY OWN APPRENTICES, POISONED BY THEIR VENOM!



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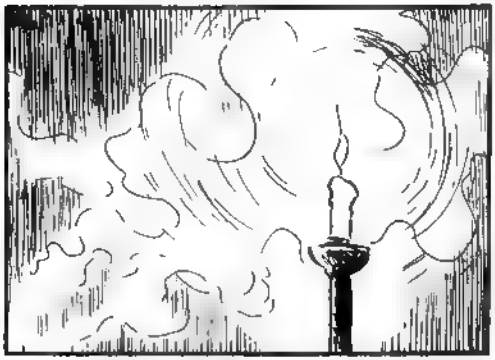
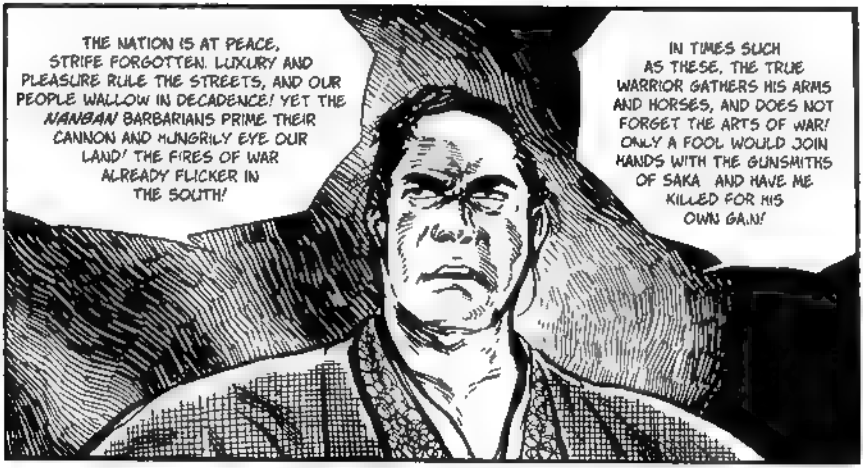


IT'S OVER.. MY QUEST OF THE GUN, OVER.


THE NATION IS AT PEACE, STRIFE FORGOTTEN. LUXURY AND PLEASURE RULE THE STREETS, AND OUR PEOPLE WALLOW IN DECADENCE! YET THE *NANBAN* BARBARIANS PRIME THEIR CANNON AND HUNGRILY EYE OUR LAND! THE FIRES OF WAR ALREADY FLICKER IN THE SOUTH!
IN TIMES SUCH AS THESE, THE TRUE WARRIOR GATHERS HIS ARMS AND HORSES, AND DOES NOT FORGET THE ARTS OF WAR! ONLY A FOOL WOULD JOIN HANDS WITH THE GUNSMITHS OF SAKA AND HAVE ME KILLED FOR HIS OWN GAIN!

WEAPONS HAVE A LIFE OF THEIR OWN! MAKE ONE WEAPON, AND A SECOND APPEARS TO DEFEAT IT! A THIRD TO MAKE THAT SECOND ONE OBSOLETE! YET THEY SEEK TO SIMPLY *STEAL* MY DESIGNS AND *COPY* THEM!
THEY HASTEN THE DAY WHEN *ALL* ARE OBSOLETE, AND OUR NATION LIES *UNDEFENDED!*

THE CUTTING EDGE ISN'T THE *WEAPON* THE CUTTING EDGE IS *SKILL*, THE ENDLESS EFFORT OF THE *INVENTOR!*
IF THIS TRUTH IS FORGOTTEN, OUR LAND WILL LIE AS TANGLED AS GRASSES IN THE WIND, AND THE NATION WILL *FALL!*

DO YOU UNDER-STAND?!

....
....
THE WAY OF THE ASSAS-SIN HAS NO WORDS.

ONLY FANGS!
OUR QUESTS HAVE MUCH IN COMMON!
ALL IN COMMON, YOU SAY?!

WE BOTH WALK THE PATH OF DEATH THE WAY OF THE ASSASSIN, THE WAY OF THE GUN THEY CROSS ON THE FIELD OF SLAUGHTER
YES! YES!! IT'S TRUE!
A REQUEST! WILL YOU HEAR ONE LAST REQUEST?!

SPEAK.

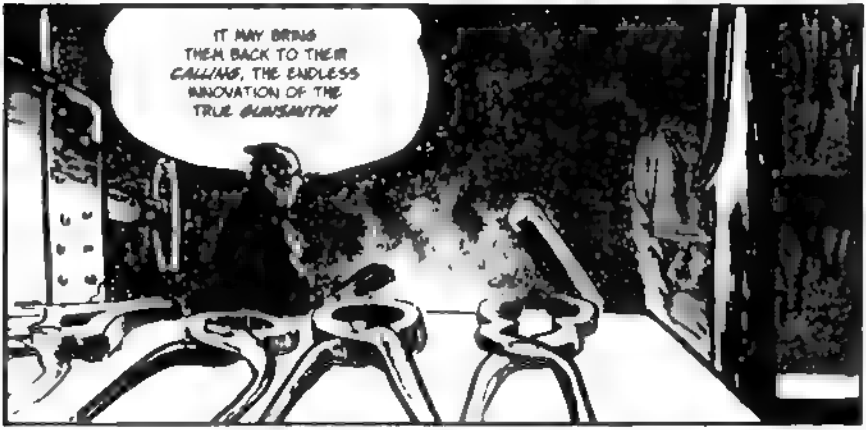
HERE.

....
....

BUILD THESE GUNS! USE THEM ON YOUR ASSASSIN'S ROAD!
TO WHAT END...?

IF YOU USE MY MULTIPLE-FIRE RIFLE, YOUR OPPONENTS WILL BE STRUCK DUMB WITH FEAR! AND THEN THEY'LL SEARCH FRANTICALLY FOR A WAY TO DEFEAT IT

ESPECIALLY THE GUNSMITHS OF SAKAI! THEY'LL LOSE ALL FACE! THEY'LL BE FORCED TO MOBILIZE AND CREATE NEW WEAPONS!

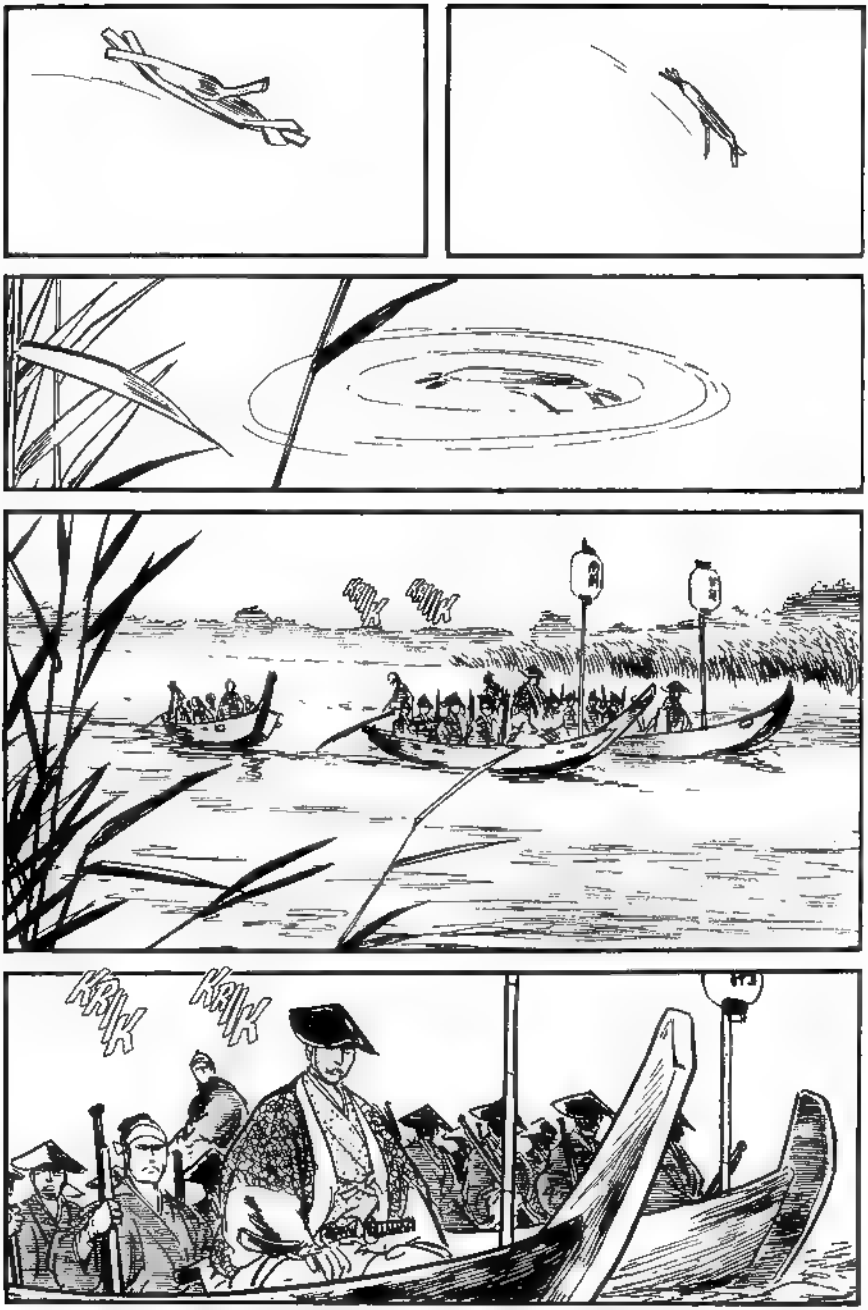

IT MAY BRING THEM BACK TO THEIR CALLING, THE ENDLESS INNOVATION OF THE TRUE GUNSMITH!

AND ONE THING MORE! WHEREVER MY MULTIPLE-FIRE RIFLE GOES, MY SPIRIT TRAVELS WITH IT! MY REDEMPTION!

I BEG YOU- GRANT MY REQUEST!

GRANTED !!

SKUSSH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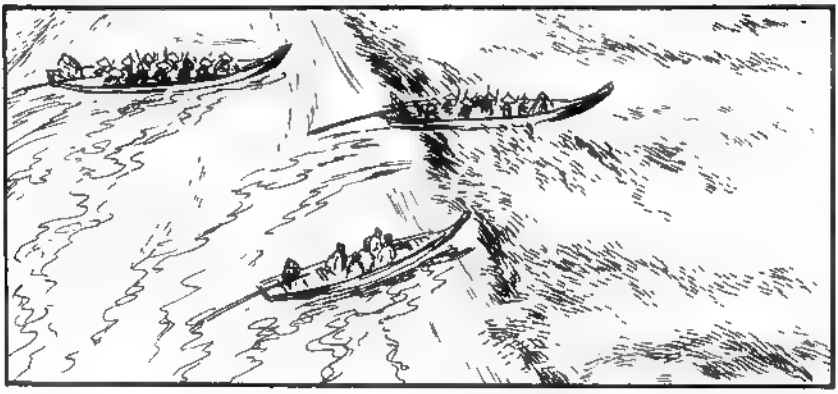
THERE HE IS!
FASTER!!



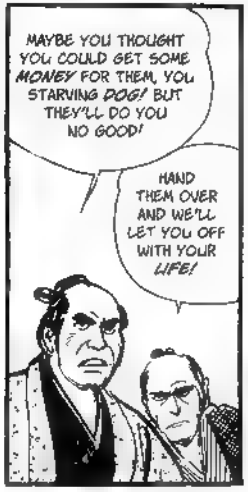
SKSSSH
ZZSSHH

HALT!!

I PERFORMED YOUR ASSASSINATION FOR YOU..
YES, I'VE SEEN YOUR WORK.
BUT THE *MULTIPLE-FIRE RIFLE* AND THE *REPEATING RIFLE PLANS* WE WANTED ARE *GONE!*

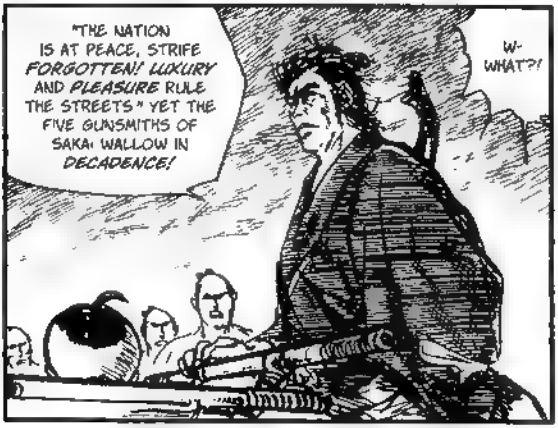
WE SEARCHED EVERY *INCH* OF SHICHIRŌBEI'S WORKSHOP! THERE'S ONLY ONE OTHER PLACE THEY COULD BE. .

*YOU* HAVE THEM!


MAYBE YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD GET SOME *MONEY* FOR THEM, YOU STARVING *DOG!* BUT THEY'LL DO YOU NO GOOD!
HAND THEM OVER AND WE'LL LET YOU OFF WITH YOUR *LIFE!*

YOU ARE THE FIVE GUN-SMITHS OF SAKAI?!

S-SO WHAT F WE ARE?!
SURRENDER THE PLANS, OR YOU'LL FEEL THE POWER OF OUR SAKAIZUTSU IN YOUR SHATTERED FLESH!!
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?!


"THE NATION IS AT PEACE, STRIFE FORGOTTEN! LUXURY AND PLEASURE RULE THE STREETS" YET THE FIVE GUNSMITHS OF SAKAI WALLOW IN DECADENCE!
W-WHAT?!

HEAR ME OUT!!
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF SILENT SHICHIRŌBEI!

"THE *NANBAN* BARBARIANS PRIME THEIR CANNON AND HUNGRILY EYE OUR LAND! THE FIRES OF WAR FLICKER IN THE SOUTH!

"IN TIMES SUCH AS THESE, THE *TRUE* WARRIOR GATHERS HIS ARMS AND HORSES, AND DOES NOT FORGET THE ARTS OF WAR!

"ONLY A *FOOL* WOULD JOIN HANDS WITH THE GUNSMITHS OF SAKAI, AND HAVE ME KILLED FOR HIS OWN *GAIN!*"

WHY *YOU*— !!

HOW *DARE* A MERE ASSASSIN TALK BACK TO HIS *EMPLOYER!*

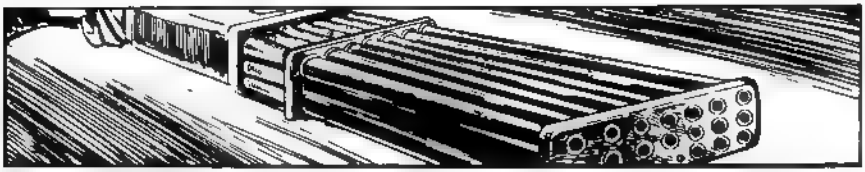
*SILENCE!*

THE *WAY OF THE ASSASSIN* DEMANDED THAT I KILL SHICHIROBE AS ASKED.

...BUT YOU FLAUNT A MURDERED CORPSE AND SPIN A WEB OF LIES!
YOU'RE UNWORTHY OF MY SERVICE!

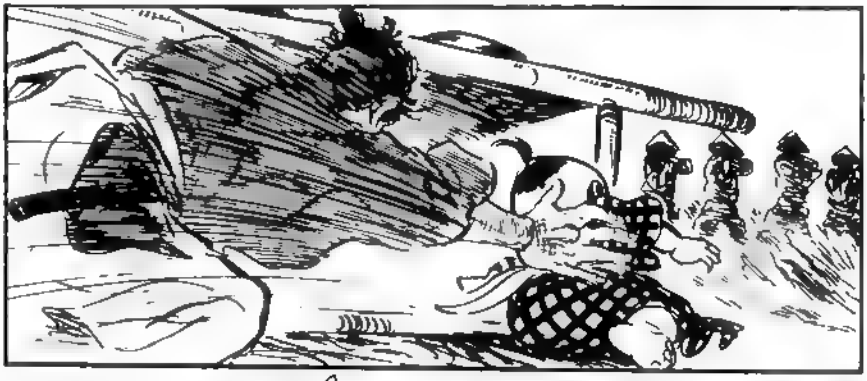
NO MORE QUES-TIONS!
KILL HIM AND TAKE THE PLANS!
R-READY! AIM–

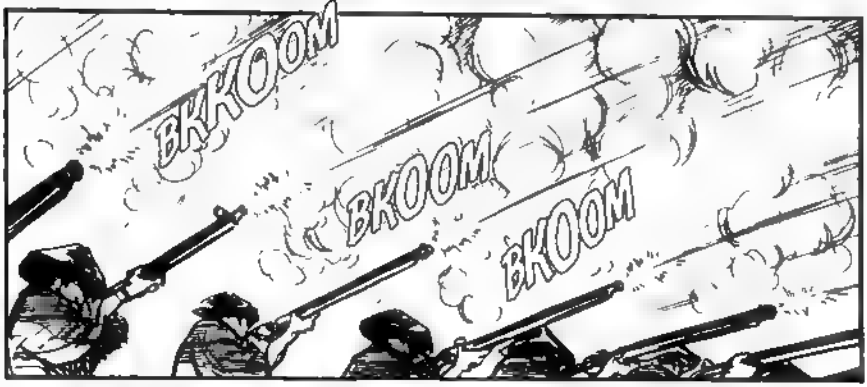
FWSSH



AHH?!

WHUD

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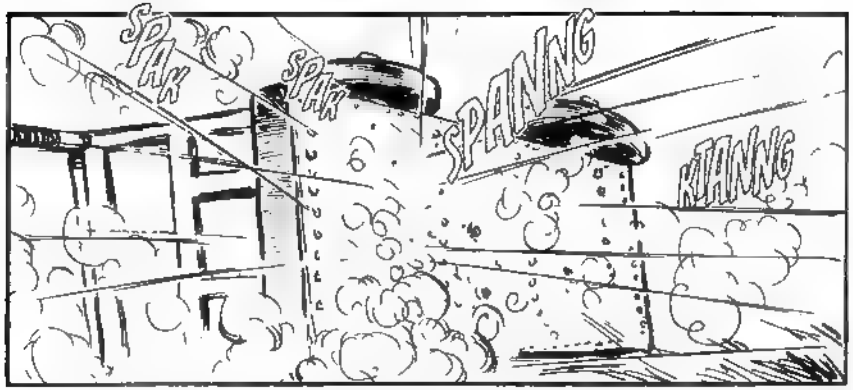
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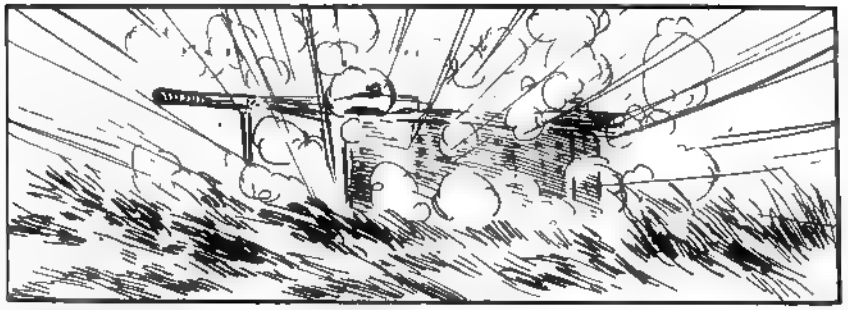

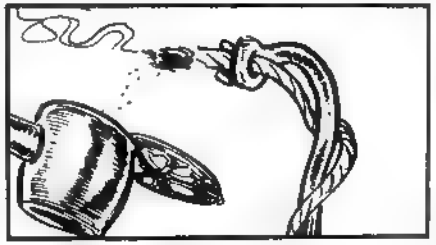

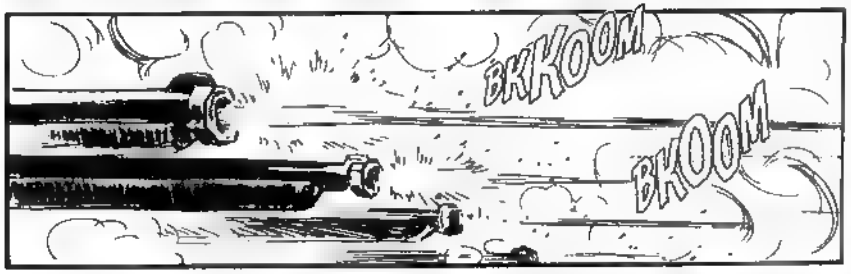
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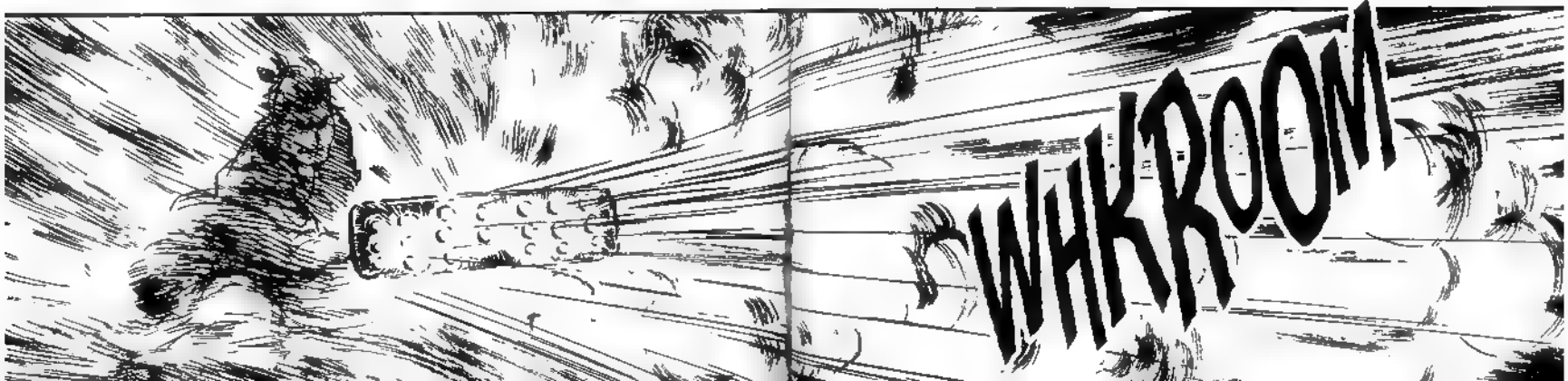
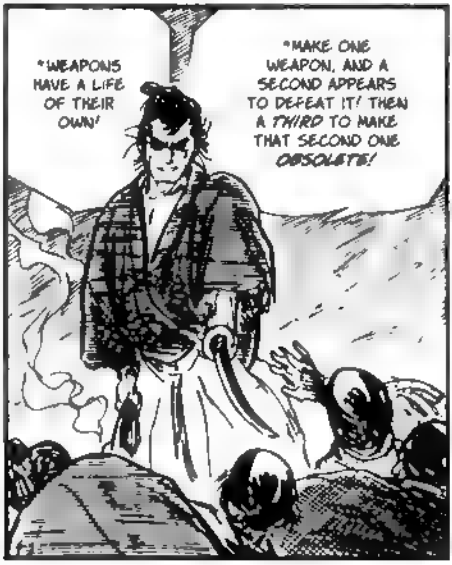

WHKROOM

UUGH
NNG
AAH!
AAAH!
SKSH

NO! DON'T!!
S-SPARE US!!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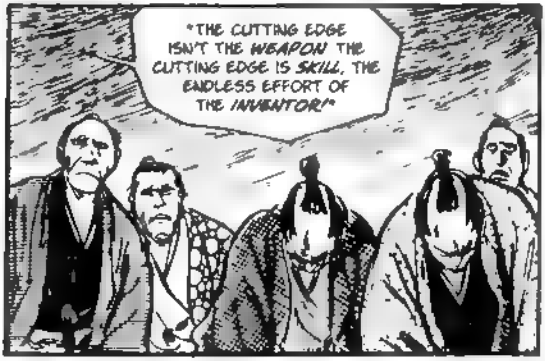
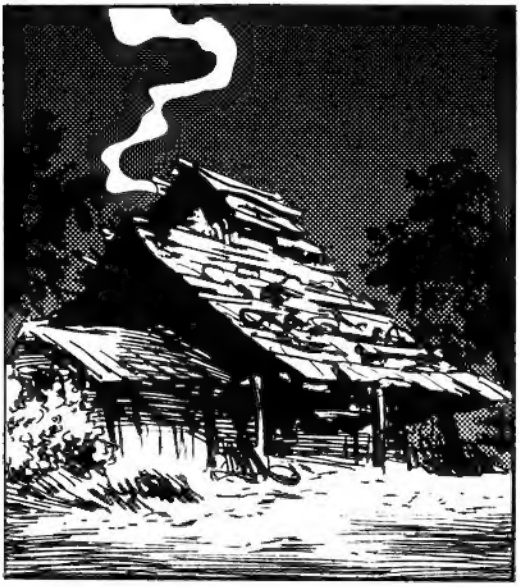
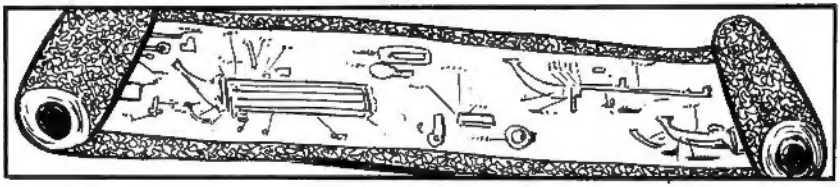

"THE CUTTING EDGE ISN'T THE *WEAPON* THE CUTTING EDGE IS *SKILL*, THE ENDLESS EFFORT OF THE *INVENTOR!*"

I SPARE YOUR LIVES, AT SHICHIRÔBEI'S LAST REQUEST!
ENGRAVE HIS WORDS ON YOUR HEARTS!

KCHK



DAMN...PAYIN' ME TO USE THE FORGE, RIGHT THIS INSTANT!



*LONE WOLF AND CUB BOOK FIVE: THE END*
*TO BE CONTINUED*

# GLOSSARY

**ban**
A local policeman, much like a sheriff.

**Daikan**
The primary local representative of the shogunate in territories outside of the capital of Edo.

**daimyō**
A feudal lord.

**dōtanuki**
A battle sword. Literally, "sword that cuts through torsos."

**The Forty-Seven Ronin**
In one of the most famous stories in Japanese history, forty-seven loyal retainers of a lord forced to kill himself because of the schemes of an enemy dedicated their lives to avenging him, before committing ritual suicide at his grave.

**giyaman**
From the Portuguese "diamante," or diamond, the tool used to make cut-glass containers.

**han**
A feudal domain.

**jōdai**
Castle warden. The ranking *han* official in charge of a *daimyō*'s castle when the *daimyō* was spending his obligatory years in Edo.

**kōgi go-yō**
The shogun's business.

**kōgi kaishakunin**
The shogun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shogun.

**machi-bugyō**
The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners.

**meifumadō**
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

**metsuke**
Inspector. A post combining the functions of chief of police and chief intelligence officer.

**nagamaki**
A two-handed spear-like weapon taller than a man, with a short shaft and long, curved blade. Similar to the more common naginata, which had a longer shaft.

**nanban**
Westerners were known as "southern barbarians," after the first traders reaching Japan from the south. By the Edo period, Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch adventurers, traders, and missionaries were active across Asia.

**o-niwaban**
"One in the garden". A ninja. the secret agents of the Shōgunate, heard but never seen.

**O-Sadamegaki**
Short for Kujigata O-Sadamega. The concordance of shogunate laws, compiled in 1742.

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